



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 01 February 2019

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at a Meeting of the **Grampian Valuation Joint Board** is to be held at **Woodhill House, Aberdeen**, on **Friday, 01 February 2019** at **10:30**.

BUSINESS

- 1. Sederunt**
- 2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests ***
- 3. Minute of Previous Meeting on 16 November 2018** **5 - 8**
- 4. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement 1 April to 31 Dec 2018** **9 - 14**
Report by the Treasurer
- 5. Revenue Budget 2019-20** **15 - 26**
Report by the Treasurer
- 6. Annual Audit Plan 2018-19** **27 - 38**
Report by the External Auditor
- 7. Internal Audit Plan** **39 - 40**
Report by the Treasurer
- 8. Register of Electors** **41 - 46**
Report by the Electoral Registration Officer
- 9. Valuation Roll and Council Tax** **47 - 54**
Report by the Electoral Registration Officer

10. Governance

**55 -
106**

Report by the Electoral Register Officer

11. Question Time ***

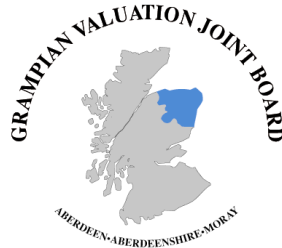
Consider any oral question on matters delegated to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administration.

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| GUIDANCE NOTES |
|-----------------------|

- * **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests** - At the beginning of the meeting, immediately following the Sederunt, the Convener will, in terms of Standing Order 25, seek declarations from individuals on any financial or other interests.

- ** **Written Questions** - Any member can put one question to the Convener about relevant and competent business not already on the Agenda for a meeting of the Board. No member can put more than one question at any meeting. The member must give notice in writing of their question to the Clerk 4 working days prior to the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Convener will be tabled at the start of the relevant meeting. The member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter but no discussion will be allowed.

- *** **Question Time** - At each ordinary meeting of the Board, 10 minutes will be allowed for question time when any member can put one question to the Convener regarding any matter within the remit of the Board. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed. In the event of further information/investigation being required in order to answer the question, the Clerk will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.



Grampian Valuation Joint Board

SEDERUNT

Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Chair)
Councillor Bill Cormie (Depute Chair)
Councillor Christian Allard (Member)
Councillor Charles Buchan (Member)
Councillor Alan Donnelly (Member)
Councillor Gordon Graham (Member)
Councillor Andy Kille (Member)
Councillor Ron McKail (Member)
Councillor John Reynolds (Member)
Councillor Michael Roy (Member)
Councillor Sandy Stuart (Member)
Councillor Brian Topping (Member)
Councillor Judy Whyte (Member)
Councillor Frank Brown (Member)
Councillor Theresa Coull (Member)

Clerk Name: Tracey Sutherland
Clerk Telephone: 01343 563014
Clerk Email: tracey.sutherland@moray.gov.uk

Minute of Meeting of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Friday, 16 November 2018

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor Christian Allard, Councillor Charles Buchan, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Ron McKail, Councillor Michael Roy, Councillor Sandy Stuart, Councillor Brian Topping, Councillor Judy Whyte

APOLOGIES

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Bill Cormie, Councillor Alan Donnelly, Councillor Gordon Graham, Councillor Andy Kille, Councillor John Reynolds

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were Councillor Feaver substituting for Councillor Brown, Councillor McGregor substituting for Councillor Cormie, Councillor Lesley Berry substituting for Councillor Kille, Gavin Oag, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, Lorraine Paisey, Treasurer to the Board and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer (Moray Council).

1. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 25 and the Councillor's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from group leaders or spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Members' interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

2. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that no written questions were submitted.

3. Minute of the Previous Meeting held on 24 August 2018

The minute of the meeting of the Board dated 24 August 2018 was submitted and approved by the Board.

4. Minute of the Previous Meeting held on 24 August 2018

The minute of the meeting of the Board dated 24 August 2018 was submitted and approved by the Board.

5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement 1 April to 30 Sept 2018

A report by the Treasurer to the Board was submitted to consider the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 30 September 2018.

Following consideration, the Board agreed to note the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018 and also note the outturn forecast for the financial year 2018/19.

6. Public Performance Report

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer asked the Board to note the content of the Public Performance Report and sought agreement for the publication of the Public Performance Report as provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Members of the Board, joined the Chair in commending the Assessor and ERO and his staff on the professionalism and dedication of the staff, which is reflected in the low ill health absences.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the contents of the Public Performance Report and agreed to the publication of the report provided as Appendix 1 to this report.

7. Register of Electors Annual Canvass

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer asked the board to note the content of the report with regards to the Register of Electors Annual Canvass.

Following consideration, the Board agreed to note the content of the report.

8. Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation List

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer was submitted to ask the Board to note the current position with regards to the Valuation Roll and Council Tax Valuation List.

Following consideration the Board agreed to note the current position.

9. IRRV Scottish Conference

A report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer asked the Board to note the attendance at the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation's Scottish Conference.

Councillor Topping, who attended the conference, urged Members to attend the conference in the future, as he had found it very informative and beneficial.

The Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer at Councillor Topping's request, advised that he would circulate the slides from the speakers presentations to all members of the Board.

Following consideration the Board noted the content of the report.

10. Question Time ***

There were no questions raised.



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

SUBJECT: REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2018

BY: TREASURER TO THE BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April to 31 December 2018.
- 1.2 To consider the Estimated Outturn position for the year 2018/19.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Board considers and notes:

- (i) **The Revenue Monitoring Statement for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018; and**
- (ii) **The estimated outturn forecast for the financial year 2018/19.**

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 At its meeting on 26 January 2018 the Board agreed the Revenue Budget for 2018/19 and approved that the requisitions from constituent authorities be set at £4,292,000.
- 3.2 **APPENDIX 1** shows the monitoring position to 31 December 2018. It gives details of the 2018/19 revenue budget, the actual to date and the variance to date. It also shows the estimated outturn and the estimated variance for the year. Total net expenditure to 31 December 2018 is £2,976,000 which is an underspend against budget to date of £190,000.
- 3.3 To date there is a £140,000 underspend within employee costs; £81,000 of this relates to vacant posts and the remainder to the 2018/19 pay award budgeted for but not yet agreed.

- 3.4 It was reported at budget setting time that a vacancy management provision of £52,000 would be introduced to absorb any variance created by vacancies until there is someone recruited and in post. At this point of the year the provision to date is £35,000. When offset against the underspend in staffing, training and other employee costs, this provision reduces the variance on total employee costs to £140,000 under budget to date.
- 3.5 There are currently 3.4 FTE vacancies at various levels.
- 3.6 The 2018/19 pay award included in the budget is at rates contained in the Public Sector Pay Policy, set out by the Scottish Government in December 2017. The key features of the pay policy, which acts as a benchmark for all major public sector workforce groups across Scotland, are: an increase of 3% for those earning £30,000 or less; a limit of 2% for those earning above £30,000 and below £80,000; limiting the pay increase for those earning £80,000 or more to £1,600. This proposed pay award was rejected and at the time of writing this report the pay award for 2018/19 is still under negotiation, with the latest proposal being a 3.5% increase for salaries up to £80,000 and a flat rate £1,600 thereafter. This latest proposal has been incorporated into the estimated outturn figures for 2018/19.
- 3.7 Accommodation charges to date are £30,000 under budget; a credit of £35,000 was received in December 2018 for the reduction in service charge relating to the year 2017/18; a further £10,000 was accrued in 2017/18 for Woodhill House service charge adjustment which is still outstanding, creating a variance; there are budget overspends of £6,000 for NDR for the three office locations, and a further £9,000 of unbudgeted Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBTT), which is a tax applied on the purchase and lease of both residential and non-residential/commercial properties. Other minor variances in repairs and maintenance, and energy costs bring the total Property Costs variance to a £27,000 under spend.
- 3.8 Transport costs are over budget to date by £12,000 as a result of canvassing expenditure.
- 3.9 The total expenditure on Supplies and Services is £455,000 which is £54,000 underspent against budget to date, with minor overspends and underspends across the headings. The main variances are set out below.
- 3.10 Printing and stationery is £11,000 under budget to date but is expected to be back on budget by year end.
- 3.11 Postages are significantly under budget at this point of the year; with a variance of £44,000 reflecting the expected costs of a typical year in the service without an election and/or referendum.
- 3.12 Advertising is over budget due to a combined press and media campaign with other Assessors. This is an annual advertising campaign for IER.

- 3.13 The IT maintenance and support budget shows an overspend to date of £13,000. This is discussed in paragraph 4.6 below.
- 3.14 The initial Individual Electoral Registration (IER) grant awarded to Grampian VJB was £102,835, less than budget. The Assessor has recently submitted a Justification Led Bid (JLB) for £56,965 of additional IER-related costs that have been incurred in the year.
- 3.15 There are no other significant variances to report at this stage.

4. ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2018/19

- 4.1 The revenue budget is expected to be underspent by the year end and at this quarter three point the variance is estimated to be an underspend of £144,000.
- 4.2 The largest underspend anticipated is in employee costs, at £93,000. With expected vacancies throughout the year, and the effect that internal recruitment has on vacant posts, the estimated variance in salaries including National Insurance and Superannuation is £145,000. This underspend is reduced by the vacancy management provision of £52,000. The estimated actual figures in Appendix 1 have been calculated on the basis of the revised pay offer explained in paragraph 3.5 and include it backdated to the 1 April 2018 application date.
- 4.3 Property costs are expected to be £16,000 over budget. As mentioned in paragraph 3.7 NDR is over budget for the three offices and the renewal of the Woodhill House rental lease incurred an expense for LBTT that wasn't budgeted for.
- 4.4 Supplies and Services are estimated to be £34,000 under budget in total. As explained in paragraph 3.12, the underspend to date in postages is as a result of a typical year in the service without an election and/or referendum. Should this continue, an estimated outturn of £220,000 is forecast for this year against the budget of £280,000.
- 4.5 Advertising will be over budget by £6,000 as the combined Scottish Assessors campaign has already taken place. This advertising is likely to continue in future years and the budget will be addressed.
- 4.6 IT budgets are expected to be over budget by £21,000. This is due to the increased costs for the new Electoral Management System (EMS), including a SAN disk storage replacement that wasn't included when costing the project. A saving has been identified within an IT Analyst post that would offset this; this is included in the projected underspend in employee costs. The capital costs of the EMS project are estimated at £56,000 and will be met from the Capital Fund with any remaining costs from revenue.
- 4.7 Income from sales of the electoral register is difficult to predict with most sales occurring in the second half of the year. The £13,000 estimated outturn is

based on recent trends, and is higher than budget. This will be taken into account when setting next year's budget.

4.8 As stated in paragraph 3.16 the IER grant allocation awarded to Grampian VJB this year is £102,835. Assuming the justification led bid is successful the total income received towards IER will be £160,000.

4.9 The estimated outturn as shown in Appendix 1 is an underspend of £144,000.

5. GENERAL FUND

5.1 The General Fund balance at 31 March 2018 was £153,000.

5.2 The policy for the General Fund is to permit a transfer to fund restricted to 3% of the total budget in any one year and the cumulative balance of the fund cannot exceed 5% of the total budget.

5.3 The estimated outturn for 2018/19 is an underspend of £144,000. This would represent a transfer to the General Fund of £62,000, bringing the total balance to £215,000 at 31 March 2019, the maximum permitted. The remaining surplus of £82,000 would be refunded to constituent authorities on approval of the audited accounts.

6. CAPITAL FUND

6.1 The Capital Fund was established in 2002/03 using the Boards share from the sale of Woodhill House. The fund was retained in order to assist with any capital expenditure relating to office accommodation. The current balance of the Capital Fund is £55,000 and as indicated in paragraph 4.6 the procurement of the new EMS system will be part funded from the Capital Fund.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The total net expenditure as at 31 December 2018 is £2,976,000; an underspend against budget to date of £190,000.

7.2 The estimated outturn is an underspend of £144,000. Of this, an estimated £62,000 would be transferred to the General Fund, with a refund to authorities of £82,000.

7.3 The Assessor and his Senior Management Team closely monitor and control budgets in order to keep within agreed levels and generate savings wherever possible throughout the year.

Author of Report:
Background papers:

Susan Souter, Accountant.
Held within Accountancy Section, Moray Council

**GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD REVENUE MONITORING STATEMENT
FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2018**

| Line No. | 2018-19 Total Budget | 2018-19 Budget to Date | Actual 31 Dec 2018 | Variance 31 Dec 2018 | 2018-19 Estimated Outturn | 2018-19 Estimated Variance |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | | |
| <u>Employee Costs</u> | | | | | | |
| 1 Salaries | 2,552 | 1,910 | 1,785 | 125 | 2,440 | 112 |
| 2 National Insurance | 261 | 196 | 179 | 17 | 249 | 12 |
| 3 Superannuation | 490 | 368 | 336 | 32 | 469 | 21 |
| 4 Additional Pensions | 23 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 23 | 0 |
| 5 Other Employee Costs | 14 | 11 | 12 | (1) | 14 | 0 |
| 6 Training | 10 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 0 |
| 7 Vacancy Management | (52) | (35) | 0 | (35) | 0 | (52) |
| Total Employee Costs | 3,298 | 2,472 | 2,332 | 140 | 3,205 | 93 |
| <u>Property Costs</u> | | | | | | |
| 8 Accommodation Charges | 319 | 253 | 223 | 30 | 335 | (16) |
| 9 Repairs and Maintenance | 4 | 2 | 3 | (1) | 4 | 0 |
| 10 Energy Costs | 8 | 6 | 8 | (2) | 8 | 0 |
| 11 Cleaning | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Total Property Costs | 335 | 264 | 237 | 27 | 351 | (16) |
| <u>Transport Costs</u> | | | | | | |
| 12 Staff Travel and Subsistence | 69 | 52 | 64 | (12) | 78 | (9) |
| Total Transport Costs | 69 | 52 | 64 | (12) | 78 | (9) |
| <u>Supplies & Services</u> | | | | | | |
| 13 Equipment, Furniture & Materials | 7 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 14 Text & Reference Books | 10 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 0 |
| 15 Printing & Stationery | 34 | 25 | 14 | 11 | 34 | 0 |
| 16 Postages | 280 | 210 | 166 | 44 | 220 | 60 |
| 17 Telephones | 7 | 5 | 6 | (1) | 7 | 0 |
| 18 Advertising | 2 | 2 | 8 | (6) | 8 | (6) |
| 19 IT Maintenance & Support | 170 | 128 | 141 | (13) | 191 | (21) |
| 20 ER bulk printing & Returns (was Canvass) | 75 | 75 | 66 | 9 | 75 | 0 |
| 21 Valuation Appeals | 56 | 29 | 25 | 4 | 55 | 1 |
| 22 Fees, Charges & Subs | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| 23 Specialist Services | 23 | 17 | 21 | (4) | 25 | (2) |
| 24 Other Supplies & Services | 0 | 0 | 1 | (1) | 1 | (1) |
| Total Supplies & Services | 667 | 509 | 455 | 54 | 633 | 34 |
| <u>Support Services</u> | | | | | | |
| 25 Lead Authority Charge | 57 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 57 | 0 |
| Total Support Services | 57 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 57 | 0 |
| Gross Expenditure | 4,426 | 3,297 | 3,088 | 209 | 4,324 | 102 |
| <u>Income</u> | | | | | | |
| 26 Sales and Other Income | (6) | (6) | (9) | 3 | (13) | 7 |
| 27 Government Grant and recharges | (125) | (125) | (103) | (22) | (160) | 35 |
| 28 Interest on Revenue balances | (3) | 0 | 0 | 0 | (3) | 0 |
| Total Income | (134) | (131) | (112) | (19) | (176) | 42 |
| 29 Net Expenditure | 4,292 | 3,166 | 2,976 | 190 | 4,148 | 144 |
| 30 Requisitions | (4,292) | (3,215) | (3,215) | 0 | (4,292) | 0 |
| 31 (Surplus)/Deficit for Year | 0 | (49) | (239) | 190 | (144) | 144 |



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

SUBJECT: REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2019/20

BY: TREASURER TO THE BOARD

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Revenue Budget for 2019/20 and to agree the 2019/20 requisitions to the three constituent authorities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board considers and notes the:-

- (i) changing legislation framework within which the Assessor's services work as set out in paragraph 3.2; and
- (ii) level of uncertainty regarding key expenditure assumptions as set out in Section 4 of this report.

- 2.2 It is recommended that the Board approves the:-

- (i) budget for 2019/20 is set at £4,463,000 as detailed in APPENDIX 1, which includes £99,000 to meet the additional demands of the NDR reform; and
- (ii) requisitions to the constituent authorities for 2019/20 are set at £4,463,000 as detailed in the table at paragraph 6.2.

3. Background

- 3.1 The main issues for the Assessor's service to be addressed in setting the budget for 2019/20 budget are:

- Increased duties and workload for the services arising from implementation of recommendations from the Barclay review of Non Domestic Rates;

- Key areas of financial uncertainty, in particular salary increases and government funding.

Medium term Financial Planning for the Assessor's service requires to be developed, taking these issues into account and addressing the potential for efficiency savings. Emerging issues for the medium term include accommodation costs, with repairs and maintenance anticipated to be required for the Banff office and a boiler refurbishment at the Elgin office. No provision for these have been made in the indicative budget figures for 2020/21.

Non-Domestic Rates Reform

- 3.2 The Barclay review group was set up to make recommendations to reform the Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) system in Scotland. Scottish Government has considered the findings of the review and decided on various reforms to the NDR system. There are three main reforms, two of which have significant implications for the working of the Assessor's service. The recommendation with most impact on the Assessors is the move to a three yearly revaluation cycle from a five year cycle, and the need to dispose of all revaluation appeals within that same timeframe. This is a major task and it is imperative that the proposals are implemented effectively and with minimum disruption to the creation and ongoing maintenance of the valuation rolls by the Assessor. The second is the reform of the appeals process aimed at reducing appeal volumes, and greater levels of transparency and consistency by Assessors, in itself another substantial pressure on the service. The third reform is the introduction of a Business Growth Accelerator model. This should not present significant additional pressure to the Assessor in setting up internal processes to manage the new provisions, but is likely to incur costs for the constituent authorities for ICT system amendments.
- 3.3 The Scottish Assessors Association submitted a funding request via COSLA to meet the cost of implementing NDR reform, and in total £3.3 million was included in the local government settlement announced in December 2018. The distribution of this additional funding to local authorities has yet to be agreed.
- 3.4 The Assessor proposes to recruit undergraduates on a temporary basis in the summer months of 2019/20 with a view to offering them full time employment from 2020/21. This proposal takes into account the potential availability of qualified staff and also seeks to minimise the cost of implementation. Additional IT and portal development work will be required to meet the additional demands for wider and more detailed provision of valuation information with the three year revaluation cycle. These additional costs have been included in the budget in **APPENDIX 1**.
- 3.5 The table below summaries the 2019/20 and 2020/21 estimated costs to implement NDR reforms by the Grampian Assessor. These figures have been incorporated into the expenditure budgets in Appendix 1, with a separate line shown for the impact on requisitions:

| | 2019/20 £000 | 2020/21 £000 |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Trainee Valuers | 39 | 114 |
| Valuers | | 90 |
| Admin | | 95 |
| Sub Total | 39 | 299 |
| | | |
| Portal | 10 | 10 |
| IT Systems | 50 | 50 |
| | | |
| Total | 99 | 359 |

4. **Budget Variables**

- 4.1 It is good practice for local government bodies to plan for a range of scenarios, and the Board's external auditors, Audit Scotland, expect the Board to look at alternative budget scenarios as part of their budget preparation process. The main areas of uncertainty within the budget are the level of anticipated pay award and the level of expected government funding. Various levels of pay award and grant funding have been reviewed during the budget setting process for 2019/20 and looking forward to 2020/21.
- 4.2 In December 2017, the Scottish Government set out their Public Sector Pay Policy (PSP) for 2018/19 and it was this scenario that was approved by the Board to include in the budget for 2018/19. The key features of the 2018/19 Pay Policy were: providing a minimum increase of 3% for those who earn £30,000 or less; a limit of up to 2% for those earning above £30,000 and below £80,000; limiting the maximum pay increase for those earning £80,000 or more to £1,600. This proposal was rejected and, at the time of writing this report, the pay award for 2018/19 is still under negotiation, with the latest proposal being a 3.5% increase on pay grades up to £80,000 and the £1,600 flat rate above that, and 3.0% in the two subsequent years 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- 4.3 The table below summarises the different scenarios, assuming the pay award mentioned in 3.7 for 2018/19, and annual increments where expected.

| Scenario | Impact on 2019/20 Budget £000 | Impact on 2020/21 Budget £000 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2.5% pay award | 104 | 99 |
| 3.0% pay award | 121 | 118 |
| 3.5% pay award | 139 | 136 |

- 4.4 At this time, the actual pay awards for 2018/19 and thereafter will be are not agreed. Salary increases for 2018/19 have been calculated at the rates contained in the latest pay offer currently under consideration. A 3.0% pay award for 2019/20 is included within the draft budget for 2019/20 and a 3.0% pay award has been included in the indicative budget for 2020/21, in accordance with Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy. This policy is not mandatory for the Assessors service.
- 4.5 The second key area of uncertainty relates to the level of government funding towards the costs of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Since 2014/15, the Cabinet Office has given the Board £1,107,000 in funding for the implementation of IER. The amount includes both the initial allocations made by the Cabinet Office and additional sums for specific costs e.g. for maximising registration and software development. The level of funding is undefined in future years, although the Cabinet Office has previously indicated that funding will be made available until 2019/20. The Assessor has not been informed of the level of government funding for 2019/20. Past trends have been considered when preparing this budget and the level of initial grant funding has been decreasing at a consistent rate as IER becomes embedded in the routine work of the service. In 2015/16 the funding was £207,576, reducing to £174,142 in 2016/17 and £151,000 in 2017/18. In 2018/19 the grant was £102,835, however a further justification led bid has been submitted to the Cabinet Office for £57,000. It has not been approved at the time of writing this report, but it was assumed to be successful when considering future funding scenarios, below. The best case scenario for 2019/20 is that funding will not decrease from 2018/19 initial award plus the justification led bid. It is considered likely that the level of direct funding will decrease. A mid-point position has been adopted for the purposes of the 2019/20 budget, and a grant figure of £130,000 has been included. It is expected that this may be made up of the initial grant plus a later justification led bid towards the end of the financial year.
- 4.6 The table below summarises the different scenarios.

| Scenario | Impact | 2019/20 £000 | 2020/21 £000 |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Optimistic | No reduction in funding (including JLB) | 160 | 130 |
| Mid Point | Reduction by similar amount as previous year | 130 | 100 |
| Pessimistic | Reduction to 2/3 of previous year | 100 | 70 |

- 4.7 The main income to the Board is generated by requisitions to the constituent authorities. The level of funding made available to the constituent authorities to fund NDR reform is unknown at this time. Funding will not be ring-fenced and there will be additional costs of NDR reform to be met from this funding.

- 4.8 Costs of core ICT systems and accommodation are also significant costs to the Assessor's services, which require to be considered as part of a medium term financial plan for the services. Accommodation issues in particular require to be addressed as there are emerging requirements for expenditure at both Banff and Elgin offices (see paragraph 3.1) and an options appraisal exercise requires to be carried out prior to incorporating requirements into the budget. Current estimates of the costs of repairs and maintenance required at Banff are £20,000.

5. **2019/20 Revenue Budget Proposals**

- 5.1 The proposed 2019/20 Revenue Budget is shown in **APPENDIX 1**. The proposed budget is an increase of £171,000 (4%) which includes the additional £99,000 for NDR reform, detailed above in paragraph 3.5. The increase attributable to core budget prior to NDR reform is £72,000 (1.7%) The total net increase is summarised below and described in detail in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.17:

| Budget amendments | £000s |
|---|--------------|
| <u>Increases</u> | |
| Staffing budget – pay awards, vacancy management | 138 |
| Increase in IT budget | 12 |
| Other minor increases | 7 |
| | |
| <u>Decreases/Additional income</u> | |
| Removal of apprenticeship levy | (13) |
| Postages budget reduction | (60) |
| Increase in government grant | (5) |
| Sales and other income | (7) |
| | |
| Net increase in budget prior to NDR reform additionality | 72 |
| | |
| NDR reform budget - Staffing | 39 |
| NDR reform budget - IT and portal costs | 60 |
| | |
| Total increase in budget | 171 |

- 5.2 As noted at paragraph 3.8, pay awards have been estimated at 3.0% pay award for 2019/20 and the indicative 2020/21 budget. These amounts, plus adjustments for anniversary increments where appropriate, has resulted in a proposed increase to the salaries budget of £209,000. These have been based on top of the pay award calculated for 2018/19 in paragraph 3.7.
- 5.3 The ongoing challenge of filling vacancies has previously been highlighted to the Board. The full staffing establishment is budgeted for in Employee costs along with a vacancy management provision of £75,000, which recognises that there is normally a gap between a post being vacated and then

subsequently refilled. This provision has been consolidated within the employee costs budget.

- 5.4 The Joint Board now has its own payroll reference with the HMRC and is no longer liable for an apprenticeship levy, introduced in 2017/18. The £13,000 budget has been removed.
- 5.5 Overall the proposed Employee Costs total increases by £164,000.
- 5.6 Accommodation budgets remain the same as in 2018/19. Non Domestic Rates (NDR) for Woodhill House and the Elgin office are being charged separately to the service charge and are anticipated to increase by 3%. The rental of £125,000 and service charge of £70,000 are agreed for Woodhill House, with an additional element for a repairs and maintenance charge at Woodhill House. The service charge for Elgin is not expected to require a budget increase. The budget for Energy costs has been maintained at 2018/19 level, based on current actuals.
- 5.7 Overall the proposed Property Costs budget has not changed.
- 5.8 Staff travel and transport costs have increased by £2,000 based on current expenditure levels and service requirements.
- 5.9 Within the Supplies and Services budgets there are various proposals; with both increases and reductions in budget. Equipment and furniture will reduce to £2,000 based on a contract that wasn't renewed in 2018/19. This is now on the Procurement Action Plan and the budget may need reinstated in future years.
- 5.10 The proposed budget for Postages reflects the current expenditure and trends in recent years. In a 'normal' year i.e. with no major election or referendum taking place, the total postage costs are estimated at £200,000. With an election and/or referendum, annual postages could be as high as £280,000. Given this wide range and the uncertain political climate the 2019/20 budget is proposed at £220,000, a reduction of £60,000, but at a level that may be capable of being managed by the service if underspends arise elsewhere.
- 5.11 An increase in the advertising budget is proposed, to fund Grampian's share of an annual campaign across Scotland.
- 5.12 The most significant increase within Supplies and Services relates to the budget for IT Maintenance and Support. An estimation of £50,000 for IT system requirements to tackle the NDR reforms, as detailed in paragraph 3.5, has been included in the budget. An additional £10,000 budget is required for software licence costs for the recently procured Electoral Management System (EMS), and inflationary increases for existing contracts have also been budgeted for.
- 5.13 As highlighted to the Board at previous meetings, the budget for the Valuation Appeals Committee (VAC) costs and expenses is complex to predict. Costs

vary depending on what hearings proceed to VAC hearings, the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and the Lands Valuation Appeal Court. Another stated case as in 2017/18 which incurred significant fees is not anticipated but certainly cannot be ruled out. Similarly there is no certainty in terms of further VAC secretary or counsel's fees. As such, the budget is proposed to remain at the 2018/19 level.

- 5.14 Specialist Services cover the Scottish Assessors' Association portal costs, the external audit fee proposed by Audit Scotland and the fee payable to the pension fund for the calculation of the pensions disclosure required in the Annual Accounts. An additional £10,000 has been included for the portal costs expected as part of the NDR reforms.
- 5.15 Overall the proposed Supplies and Services increase totals £16,000.
- 5.16 The proposed Lead Authority Charge budget remains at £57,000.
- 5.17 In total, the income of the service is expected to increase by £11,000. The proposed budget for income from the sale of electoral registers has been increased to reflect trends. The anticipated level of Government funding has been considered at paragraph 3.10 and the proposed budget of £130,000 is an increase in budget from 2018/19 but takes into account the reasonable possibility of claiming additional funds through a justification led bid.
- 5.18 This results in a net Expenditure budget of £4,463,000 for 2019/20 reflecting current level of service, pay awards and additional expenditure requirements.
- 5.19 An indicative budget for 2020/21 is also included at **APPENDIX 1**. The effect of a 3.0% pay award is included for illustrative purposes. All other budgets have been held at the 2019/20 proposed level with the exception of the requirements to implement NDR reform. The indicative budget for 2020/21 is £369,000 higher than the proposed budget for 2019/20, of which £260,000 relates to NDR reform.

6. Risks

- 6.1 Whilst considering the 2019/20 budget, the two most significant risks relate to the level of the 2019/20 and future pay awards and the level of Government funding towards the costs of IER.
- 6.2 Salary costs, including essential user mileage, represent 78% of total net expenditure and if the pay award is higher than the budgeted rates, this would have a significant effect on total spend.
- 6.3 The level of Government funding is also unknown at the time of writing this report, although trends would indicate that the initial amount will be reduced from the 2018/19 level, with the potential to submit a further claim later in the year. If the total amount received is less than the budget amount, this would also increase the net expenditure of the service. As experienced in 2018/19, the initial grant was lower than budgeted, but the Assessor has submitted a

fully justified bid for additional costs incurred but not covered by the initial grant alone. The actual outcome of this bid will be reported to the Board at a future meeting.

- 6.4 No allowance for general inflation has been made within the budget.
- 6.4 If the actual outturn net expenditure for 2018/19 is as currently estimated at £4,148,000, there will be a surplus generated of £144,000.
- 6.5 Taking all of this into consideration, it is not recommended to budget for using General Fund Reserves when setting the 2019/20 budget which sets the requisition required to be funded by the constituent authorities at £4,463,000.

7. 2019/20 Requisitions

- 7.1 In the table below, the requisition required from each constituent authority is calculated in order to fund the Board's revenue budget for 2019/20 of £4,463,000.
- 7.2 The constituent authorities have previously agreed that expenditure by the Board should be apportioned between authorities pro rata to the population figures for each council. The population figures used are those published by the National Records of Scotland in their Mid-Year Population Estimates, Mid-2017.

| | Population | Requisition % | Proposed Requisition 2019/20 £ | Requisition 2018/19 £ | Percentage increase on 2018/19 Requisitions % |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Aberdeen City | 228,800 | 39.02 | 1,741,463 | 1,676,884 | 3.9 |
| Aberdeen-shire | 261,800 | 44.65 | 1,992,730 | 1,913,803 | 4.1 |
| Moray | 95,780 | 16.33 | 728,808 | 701,313 | 3.9 |
| TOTAL | 586,380 | 100.00 | 4,463,001 | 4,292,000 | 4.0 |

8. General Fund

- 8.1 The General Fund provides the Assessor with the flexibility to investigate and implement any future "spend to save" projects where one-off expenditure is required in order to deliver future budget savings. The reserve would allow the Assessor to re-invest savings generated by efficiencies and could also be used as a contingency to meet unforeseen costs and assist financial planning by enabling limited budget flexibility between financial years. This limited flexibility may prove invaluable over the next year or so now that the transition

phase of IER is complete and should be seen as business as usual. There is no assurance of how additional costs resulting from the successful implementation of IER will be funded in the future.

- 8.2 It was agreed by the Board at its meeting on 28 January 2011 (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers) that transfers to the General Fund would be restricted to 3% of the total budget in any one year and that the cumulative balance of the fund would not exceed 5% of the total budget.
- 8.3 The balance on the General Fund at 31 March 2018 was £153,000.
- 8.4 The estimated outturn for 2018/19 is an underspend of £144,000 which will increase the General Fund by £62,000 to £215,000 at 31 March 2019, the maximum permitted. The remaining surplus of £82,000 would be refunded to constituent authorities on approval of the audited accounts.

9. Capital Fund

- 9.1 The Capital Fund was established in 2002/03 using the Board's share from the sale of Woodhill House. After returning £400,000 to constituent authorities in 2010/11, the balance of the fund at 1 April 2018 was £55,000, following £18,000 of capital expenditure in 2017/18 on a new telephone system at Woodhill House. The remaining balance is expected to be fully used for the capital costs of the new Electoral Management System that was procured and established this current financial year.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Preparing the proposed Revenue Budget for 2019/20 has been a challenging task, trying to balance the increasing demands made upon the service against the financial constraints imposed on the public sector.**
- 10.2 The Assessor has proposed savings where possible, based on regular operations, and no exceptional circumstances. Given the current political climate can change rapidly, the Assessor will manage the service, including the resources required to maintain IER, within the constraints of the current budget and, if necessary, the flexibility afforded by the General Fund balance.**

Author of Report: Susan Souter, Accountant

Background Papers: Held in Accountancy section, Moray Council

GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD BUDGET

| Line No. | 2018-19 Budget £'000 | 2018-19 Estimated Actual £'000 | 2019-20 Proposed Budget £'000 | 2020-21 Indicative Budget £'000 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| <u>Employee Costs</u> | | | | |
| 1 Salaries | 2,552 | 2,440 | 2,645 | Item 2,520 |
| 2 National Insurance | 261 | 249 | 271 | 302 |
| 3 Superannuation | 490 | 469 | 510 | 561 |
| 4 Additional Pensions | 23 | 23 | 23 | 24 |
| 5 Other Employee Costs | 14 | 14 | 3 | 6 |
| 6 Training | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 7 Vacancy Target | (52) | - | - | - |
| Total Employee Costs | 3,298 | 3,205 | 3,462 | 3,823 |
| <u>Property Costs</u> | | | | |
| 8 Accommodation Charges | 319 | 335 | 319 | 319 |
| 9 Repairs and Maintenance | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 10 Energy Costs | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 11 Cleaning | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Total Property Costs | 335 | 351 | 335 | 335 |
| <u>Transport Costs</u> | | | | |
| 12 Staff Travel and Subsistence | 69 | 78 | 71 | 75 |
| Total Transport Costs | 69 | 78 | 71 | 75 |
| <u>Supplies & Services</u> | | | | |
| 13 Equipment, Furniture & Materials | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 14 Protective Clothing | - | - | - | - |
| 15 Text & Reference Books | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 16 Printing & Stationery | 34 | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| 17 Postages | 280 | 220 | 220 | 220 |
| 18 Telephones | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| 19 Advertising | 2 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 20 IT Maintenance & Support | 170 | 191 | 232 | 220 |
| 21 Canvas Expenses | 75 | 75 | 75 | 75 |
| 22 Valuation Appeals | 56 | 55 | 56 | 56 |
| 23 Fees, Charges & Subs | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 24 Specialist Services | 23 | 25 | 35 | 35 |
| 25 Other Supplies & Services | - | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total Supplies & Services | 667 | 633 | 683 | 671 |
| <u>Support Services</u> | | | | |
| 26 Lead Authority Charge | 57 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| Total Support Services | 57 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| 27 Gross Expenditure | 4,426 | 4,324 | 4,608 | 4,961 |
| <u>Income</u> | | | | |
| 28 Sales and Other Income | (6) | (13) | (13) | (13) |
| 29 Government Grant and recharges | (125) | (160) | (130) | (130) |
| 30 Interest on Revenue balances | (3) | (3) | (2) | (2) |
| Total Income | (134) | (176) | (145) | (145) |
| 31 Net Expenditure | 4,292 | 4,148 | 4,463 | 4,816 |
| 32 Requisitions | (4,292) | (4,292) | (4,364) | (4,457) |
| 33 Requisitions for NDR Reform | - | - | (99) | (359) |
| Total Requisitions | (4,292) | (4,292) | (4,463) | (4,816) |
| 34 (Surplus)/Deficit for Year | - | (144) | - | - |

Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Annual Audit Plan 2018/19



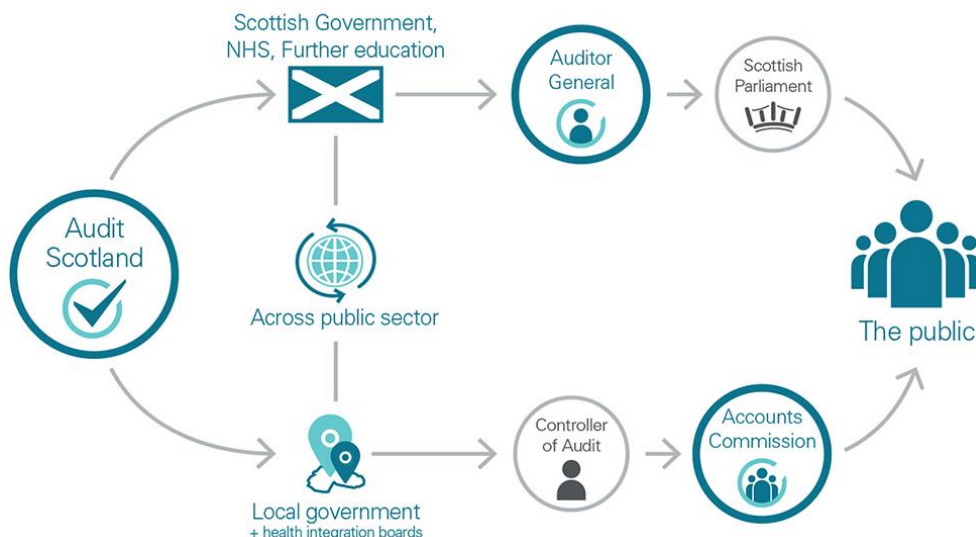
 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for Grampian Valuation Joint Board
January 2019

Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

- the Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance
- the Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government
- Audit Scotland is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.



About us

Our vision is to be a world-class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- reporting our findings and conclusions in public
- identifying risks, making clear and relevant recommendations.

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Risks and planned work

1. This annual audit plan contains an overview of the planned scope and timing of our audit and is carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), the [Code of Audit Practice](#), and any other relevant guidance. This plan sets out the work necessary to allow us to provide an independent auditor's report on the financial statements and meet the wider scope requirements of public sector audit.

2. Paragraph 53 of the Code requires the full wider scope of audit to apply to all bodies unless the auditor judges that it is not appropriate due to the size, nature and risks of the body. As a result of our initial planning work and in recognition of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board's (the Joint Board) size and value and the nature of transactions being processed, we intend to adopt a small body audit approach to the financial statements audit. Consequently, our wider scope work will focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and financial sustainability of the Joint Board over the medium to longer term.


Adding value


3. We aim to add value to the Joint Board through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and by recommending and encouraging good practice. In so doing, we intend to help the Joint Board promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making and more effective use of resources.


Audit risks

4. Based on our discussions with staff, attendance at Board meetings and a review of supporting information we have identified the following main risk areas for the Joint Board. We have categorised these risks into financial risks and wider dimension risks. The key audit risks, which require specific audit testing, are detailed in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1 2018/19 key audit risks

|  Audit Risk | Source of assurance | Planned audit work |
|--|---|---|
| Financial statements issues and risks | | |
| 1 Risk of management override of controls ISA 240 requires that audit work is planned to consider the risk of fraud, which is presumed to be a significant risk in any audit. This includes consideration of the risk of management override of controls to change the position disclosed in the financial statements. | Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance. | Detailed testing of journal entries. Review of accounting estimates. Focused testing of accruals and prepayments. Evaluation of significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business. |

|  Audit Risk | Source of assurance | Planned audit work |
|--|--|--|
| <p>2 Estimation and judgements</p> <p>There is a significant degree of subjectivity in the measurement and valuation of the pension liability and non-current asset values included in the annual accounts. This subjectivity represents an increased risk of misstatement in the accounts.</p> | <p>Use of professional actuaries appointed by the Pension Fund to value pension adjustments required by IAS19.</p> <p>Professionally qualified valuers prepare non-current asset valuations.</p> | <p>Assessment of the scope, independence and competence of the professionals engaged in providing estimates.</p> <p>Assessment of the appropriateness of the actuarial assumptions.</p> <p>Establish officers' arrangements for assessing the impact of any movement in fund values between the IAS19 valuation date and the year end.</p> <p>Focussed testing of IAS19 disclosures.</p> |
| <p>3 Related party returns and registers of interest</p> <p>Our 2017/18 Annual Audit Report highlighted that improvements were required to procedures to ensure that related party returns are completed and up to date registers of interest are maintained for all elected members and senior officers. There is a risk that related party transactions are not all detected and disclosed within the annual accounts as required by the 2018/19 Code.</p> | <p>A review of procedures for identifying related parties' disclosures within the annual accounts will be undertaken during February 2019. Registers of interest will be prepared for senior officers.</p> | <p>Review of updated policies and procedures.</p> <p>Inspection of registers of interest of members and senior officers.</p> <p>Focussed testing of related party disclosures within the annual accounts.</p> |
| Wider dimension issues and risks | | |
| <p>4 Medium to long term financial planning</p> <p>The Joint Board's budgets are prepared and approved on an annual basis and include indicative budgets for the following two years. Scenario planning is not used to model the impact of different funding levels. Without medium to longer term financial planning, there is a risk that the Joint Board is not fully prepared for potential changes in its funding levels and that opportunities and risks may not be fully realised/mitigated.</p> | <p>A report showing indicative financial plans for different scenarios and setting out the operational issues facing the Assessor & ERO will be prepared and used to underpin the budget paper for 2019/20.</p> <p>A medium term (5 years) financial strategy will also be prepared.</p> | <p>Review the 2019/20 budget paper and five-year financial strategy.</p> <p>Comment on financial sustainability within our annual audit report.</p> |

|  Audit Risk | Source of assurance | Planned audit work |
|--|--|--|
| <p>5 Governance documents</p> <p>In previous years we have highlighted that a number of key governance documents are overdue for review and update. In response, the Assessor developed a timetable for the review of these policies but progress against this was limited during 2017/18. Without regular review and update, there is a risk that the Joint Board's policies and procedures do not reflect current regulations and/or best practice.</p> | <p>A revised timetable has been prepared for review of the key governance documents.</p> | <p>Obtain a revised timetable and monitor progress against this.</p> <p>Comment on governance arrangements within our annual audit report.</p> |

Source: Audit Scotland

Reporting arrangements

5. Audit reporting is the visible output for the annual audit. All annual audit plans and the outputs as detailed in [Exhibit 2](#), and any other outputs on matters of public interest will be published on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

6. Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft management reports will be issued to the relevant officer(s) to confirm factual accuracy.

7. We will provide an independent auditor's report to the Joint Board and the Accounts Commission setting out our opinions on the annual accounts. In addition, we will provide the Treasurer and the Accounts Commission with an annual report on the audit containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit.

Exhibit 2 2018/19 audit outputs

| Audit Output | Target date | Joint Board date |
|------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Annual Audit Report | 15 August 2019 | 23 August 2019 |
| Independent Auditor's Report | 23 August 2019 | N/A |

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

8. The agreed fee for the 2018/19 audit of the Joint Board is £7,280 (prior year: £7,080). In determining the audit fee we have taken account of the risk exposure of the Joint Board, the planned management assurances in place and the level of reliance we plan to take from the work of internal audit. Our audit approach assumes receipt of the unaudited annual accounts, with a complete working papers package on 31 May 2019.

9. Where our audit cannot proceed as planned through, for example, late receipt of unaudited annual accounts or being unable to take planned reliance from the work of internal audit, a supplementary fee may be levied. An additional fee may also be required in relation to any work or other significant exercises out with our planned audit activity.

Responsibilities

Joint Board and Treasurer

10. Audited bodies have the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enable them to successfully deliver their objectives.

11. The audit of the annual accounts does not relieve management or the Joint Board, as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

Appointed auditor

12. Our responsibilities as independent auditors are established by the 1973 Act for local government and the Code of Audit Practice (including supplementary guidance) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

13. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual accounts. We also review and report on the arrangements within the audited body to manage its performance, regularity and use of resources. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

Audit scope and timing

Annual accounts

14. The annual accounts, which include the financial statements, will be the foundation and source for most of the audit work necessary to support our judgements and conclusions. We also consider the wider environment and challenges facing the public sector. Our audit approach includes:

- understanding the business of the Joint Board and the associated risks which could impact on the financial statements
- assessing the key systems of internal control, and establishing how weaknesses in these systems could impact on the financial statements
- identifying major transaction streams, balances and areas of estimation and understanding how the Joint Board will include these in the financial statements
- assessing the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements
- determining the nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to provide us with sufficient audit evidence as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

15. We will give an opinion on whether the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view in accordance with applicable law and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19 (the 2018/19 Code) of the state of affairs of the Joint Board as at 31 March 2019 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended
- have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, and interpreted and adapted by the 2018/19 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.



characteristics



responsibilities



£
principal activities



risks



governance
arrangements

Other information in the annual accounts

16. We also review and report on other information published within the annual accounts including the management commentary, annual governance statement and the remuneration report. We give an opinion on whether these have been compiled in accordance with the appropriate regulations and frameworks in our independent auditor's report.

17. We also read and consider any information in the annual accounts other than the financial statements and audited part of the remuneration report and report any uncorrected material misstatements.

Materiality

18. We apply the concept of materiality in planning and performing the audit. It is used in evaluating the effect of identified misstatements on the audit, and of any uncorrected misstatements, on the financial statements and in forming our opinions in the independent auditor's report.

19. We calculate materiality at different levels as described below. The calculated materiality values for the Joint Board are set out in [Exhibit 3](#).

Exhibit 3

2018/19 materiality values

| Materiality | Amount |
|---|---------|
| Planning materiality – this is the calculated figure we use in assessing the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. It has been set at 2% of gross expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2019 based on the revenue budget for 2018/19. | £89,000 |
| Performance materiality – this acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality this would indicate that further audit procedures should be considered. Using our professional judgement, we have calculated performance materiality at 70% of planning materiality. | £62,000 |
| Reporting threshold (i.e., clearly trivial) – we are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount. This has been calculated at 5% of planning materiality. | £4,000 |



Source: Audit Scotland

Timetable

20. To support the efficient use of resources it is critical that a timetable is agreed with us for the preparation and audit of the annual accounts. We have included an agreed timetable at [Exhibit 4](#).

Exhibit 4

Annual accounts timetable

|  Key stage |  Date |
|--|--|
| Latest submission date of unaudited annual accounts with complete working papers package | 31 May 2019 |
| Consideration of unaudited annual accounts by those charged with governance | 21 June 2019 |
| Latest date for final clearance meeting with Treasurer | 26 July 2019 |
| Agreement of audited unsigned annual accounts; and issue of Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance | 15 August 2019 |
| Independent auditor's report signed | 23 August 2019 |

Internal audit

21. Internal audit is provided by the Moray Council's internal audit section. As part of our planning process we carry out an annual assessment of the internal audit function to ensure that it operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

22. In our 2017/18 audit report we noted that an external assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) had not yet taken place and so internal audit cannot demonstrate full compliance with these Standards. Plans are in place for the assessment to take place in February 2019. We will review the findings and report the results in our Annual Audit Report.

Using the work of internal audit

23. Auditing standards require internal and external auditors to work closely together to make best use of available audit resources, and so we seek to rely on the work of internal audit wherever possible to avoid duplication. We do not plan to place any formal reliance on the work of internal audit in 2018/19 as we intend to use a substantive approach for the audit of the Joint Board's financial statements. We will consider internal audit's work on corporate governance as part of our wider dimension audit responsibilities.

Audit dimensions

24. Our standard audits are based on four audit dimensions that frame the wider scope of public sector audit requirements. These are: financial sustainability, financial management, governance and accountability and value for money.

25. As noted at paragraph 2, the Code of Audit Practice includes provisions relating to the audit of small bodies. Where the application of the full wider audit scope is judged by auditors not to be appropriate to an audited body then the annual audit work can focus on the appropriateness of the disclosures in the governance statement and the financial sustainability of the body and its services. In the light of the volume and lack of complexity of the financial transactions, we plan to apply the small body provisions of the Code to the 2018/19 audit of the Joint Board.

Independence and objectivity

26. Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission or Auditor General must comply with the Code of Audit Practice and relevant supporting guidance. When auditing the financial statements auditors must also comply with professional standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and those of the professional accountancy bodies. These standards impose stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with these standards including an annual "fit and proper" declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Director of Audit Services, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

27. The engagement lead (i.e. appointed auditor) for the Joint Board is Maggie Bruce, Senior Audit Manager. Auditing and ethical standards require the appointed auditor to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of audit staff. We are not aware of any such relationships pertaining to the audit of the Joint Board.

Quality control

28. International Standard on Quality Control (UK and Ireland) 1 (ISQC1) requires that a system of quality control is established, as part of financial audit procedures, to provide reasonable assurance that professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements are being complied with and that the independent auditor's report or opinion is appropriate in the circumstances.

29. The foundation of our quality framework is our Audit Guide, which incorporates the application of professional auditing, quality and ethical standards and the Code of Audit Practice (and supporting guidance) issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. To ensure that we achieve the required quality standards Audit Scotland conducts peer reviews and internal quality reviews. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) have been commissioned to carry out external quality reviews.

30. As part of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement, Audit Scotland will periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. We welcome feedback at any time and this may be directed to the engagement lead.

Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Annual Audit Plan 2018/19

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us to discuss your needs: 0131 625 1500 or info@audit-scotland.gov.uk

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REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

SUBJECT: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2018/19

BY: THE TREASURER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises the Board of the planned internal audit coverage of the Assessor's Service for the financial year ended 31st March 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Board considers the proposed internal audit coverage, seeks clarification on any points arising, and otherwise notes the report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In terms of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards applicable to local government and joint boards, it is necessary to develop an internal audit plan for each financial year. The plan takes account of risk and is presented to the Board to enable it to consider and comment on the proposed audit coverage.
- 3.2 It will be recognised that whilst the Assessor's Service is subject to considerable operational challenges as a consequence of legislative changes, some of which are supported by additional funding from central government, the costs of the service do not change materially from year to year. The main expenditure continues to relate to staffing costs with other outlays covering annually recurring items including office rentals and service charges, ICT infrastructure and licencing, and postage outlays.
- 3.3 Additionally, as in prior years, the main financial systems of the Assessor's Service mirror those of the Moray Council hence audit assurances provided in terms of the controls within the Council systems can be relied upon as being applicable to financial systems relating to the Service. This mitigates the risks associated with the audit and influences the nature and extent of audit work required.
- 3.4 The audit work proposed will provide the Assessor and the Treasurer with an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control systems and procedures. This informs the assurance statement relative to governance matters the Assessor prepares for inclusion with the Board's annual accounts.
- 3.5 In this context, it is expected that the work to be undertaken by Internal Audit in relation to the Service's activities will involve:

- Seeking confirmation that the Assessor continues to monitor and evaluate the principal risks facing his Service;
 - Analytical review of staff payroll costs and non pay expenditure for the current and prior years and review of any material variances, with further substantive testing where appropriate;
 - Confirmation of the controls relative to collection and submission of changes to the valuation rolls and council tax lists to the constituent Authorities;
 - Consideration of procurement processes;
 - Follow up of any prior year audit recommendations.
- 3.6 Completion of this work will provide the necessary coverage for internal audit purposes. The work is carried out independently of the external auditor for different but complementary purposes.
- 3.7 The outcomes from the audit will be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the Board on 21st June 2019.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 The Assessor has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 **Audit planning allows management to inform the audit activity to be undertaken and assists the internal audit team to schedule its work.**
- 5.2 **This report provides members of the Board with details the proposed internal audit coverage which will be undertaken to provide independent assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Service's control environment.**

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Author of Report: | Atholl Scott, Internal Audit Manager, Moray Council |
| Background Papers: | Internal Audit files |
| Ref: | as/gvjb/010219 |



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 February 2019

SUBJECT: Register of Electors – performance and developments

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To submit electoral registration performance details following the publication of the revised registers on 1 December 2018.
- 1.2 To update the Board on current developments in electoral registration.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Board note the content of this report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The 2018 canvass was the fourth complete annual canvass to be conducted since the introduction of individual electoral registration and featured an earlier start date (1 July) and an early visits to 22,989 addresses where there was a history of non-responses.
- 3.2 Policy initiatives at both a UK and Scottish government level continue to impact on the service along with a significant volume postal vote signature refresh and the implementation of the new electoral registration computer system.

4.0 Canvass 2018 – Performance details

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** to this report provides statistical data following the publication of revised registers by 1 December 2018. The local government electorate as at 1 December was 432,135; this is 6,539 less than the electorate when the registers were last revised for 1 December 2017. The IER process of revising the registers comprises two distinct elements, the first element being the household canvass that simply informs on household composition. Household composition information may be used to remove electors' names from registers where it is established that they are no longer resident. A name cannot however be removed without at least two independently verified pieces of information demonstrating that an elector is no longer resident, or failing that, a review must be carried out that involves writing to the address in question and if necessary holding a hearing.

- 4.2 Household composition information cannot be used to make additions direct to the registers. Additions can only be made where the individual in question makes an application to register to vote. Such additions tend to follow the canvass process which in turn means that registers at 1 December are not as complete as they are after the subsequent monthly updates. On 18 January 2019 18,185 potential electors identified through canvass and ongoing registration activities were contacted by post and invited to apply to register to vote.
- 4.3 Since the implementation of the Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Act 2015, that reduced the franchise age from 18 to 16 for local government and Scottish parliamentary elections, the question of when a young person can register as an attainer, and to what register do they become an attainer and when has become quite complex¹. For this reason there is a move away from statistics relating to 'attainers' to simply record the number of 15, 16 and 17 year olds currently registered to vote. In this respect there were 10,222 15, 16 and 17 year olds registered to vote as at 1 December 2018.
- 4.6 The overall canvass return rate was 84% during the 4 month canvass period. This compares to a return rate of 73% for the 2017 canvass. The last full canvass prior to IER and conducted over broadly the same time period was carried out in 2012 and at that time, the canvass return rate was 84%, with a further 8.3% of households being matched against finance data held by local authorities.
- 4.7 The combined number of automated responses to the 2018 canvass as at 1 December 2017 was 104,597. This represents the greatest number of households using cost effective automated response services and is a significant increase on the 93,919 automated household responses made by 1 December 2017. It also compares well with the 82,092 households who had opted to make automated responses prior to the introduction of IER.
- 4.8 The number of electors who opt-out of the open registers has continued to increase, with 245,146 (57%) of the total electorate as at 1 December 2018 opting out of the open registers that are available for sale to external organisations. All those aged under 16 are automatically opted out of the open register and as there is no longer a requirement to re-state the opt out preference on an annual basis; the default position is that the proportion of electors who opt out of the open register will to continue to increase on a year on year basis.

¹ On revision of the registers as at 1 December 2018, only those with 17 years of age can be treated as attainers to the UK Parliamentary register and 15 years of age for the local government register, but from 1 December onwards, those who are 16 years old can also be treated as attainers to the UK Parliamentary register, and 14 years old as attainers to the local government register providing that they reach the age of 17 or 15 respectively by 1 December next.

5.0 Electoral Registration Developments

5.1 Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

Canvass reform is the main initiative from the UK Government and work in the last 12 months has included a practitioners' workshop to examine options around data matching to identify households where residency changes have occurred and resources can be effectively focussed. The reforms were originally anticipated to be in place for 2020 but may now have a later implementation date.

5.2 Electoral reform

Following the Electoral Reform consultation launched in December 2017 the Scottish Government opened a consultation on prisoner voting² on 14 December 2018. The deadline for responses is 3 March 2019 and in common with past practice the Electoral Registration Committee of the Scottish Assessors Association will make a response on technical aspects of the consultation. The wider aspects of the Scottish Government's reforms are anticipated to take shape in the form of a Holyrood bill.

5.3 Postal vote signature refresh

During the second week of January the service issued 26,407 letters to existing postal voters requesting a fresh signature. The law requires absent voters to provide a fresh signature every 5 years and the process involves a letter and up to two reminders before the postal vote is cancelled where no response is received.

5.4 Electoral registration system

Installation and testing of the new electoral registration software is currently under way and the switch between current and new systems will be made once this process has been completed.

5.5 Elections and referendums

The possibility of an unscheduled electoral event is currently high and resource allocation and planning in place reflects this current uncertainty.

² <https://consult.gov.scot/elections/prisoner-voting/se4/uploads/consultation-on-prisoner-voting.pdf>

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The fourth IER canvass compares well to previous IER canvasses. A year-on-year comparison between 2016 and 2018 shows an improvement in return rates and the use of automated response channels. The early start date and early visits initiative have resulted in positive outcomes that will inform canvass planning for 2019.
- 6.2 Reform initiatives for the canvass and wider franchise changes are being monitored closely as is the roll out of new software during a period of significant political activity.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton
Background Papers:

Appendix: Grampian registration statistics for registers revised for 1 December 2016, 2017 and 2018

| Revised registers | 1 Dec 2018 | 1 Dec 2017 | 1 Dec 2016 |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Additions over 12 months | 40,837 | 51,567 | 60,408 |
| Additions during canvass | 19,152 | 16,459 | 16,778 |
| Deletions over 12 months | 48,382 | 53,205 | 54,847 |
| Deletions during canvass | 25,015 | 24,316 | 24,375 |
| Properties canvassed | 278,637 (3,098 exempt) | 279,281 | 276,444 |
| Return rate on 1 December | 84% | 83% | 79% |
| Automated returns on 1 December | 104,597 | 93,919 | 73,376 |
| Local government Scottish Parliament electorate | 432,135 | 438,674 | 439,589 |
| Westminster parliament electorate | 405,885 | 413,211 | 415,728 |
| Young voters (15-17yr olds) | 10,222 | 10,992 | 11,210 |
| Percentage opt-out | 57% | 55% | 53% |



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 February 2019

SUBJECT: Valuation Roll & Council Tax Valuation List

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To advise the Board of current activities and performance levels achieved during the period 1 April to 31 December 2018.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Board note the current position.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Board's Code of Corporate Governance requires reporting of operational performance by reference to measures set locally and nationally.
- 3.2 The performance thresholds have been set for the performance indicators that have been agreed between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Assessors Association. The Board reviewed the valuation roll and council tax valuation list performance thresholds in September 2018.

4. Current Position

4.1 Valuation Roll

- 4.1.1 There has been little variation in the performance to 31 October 2018 that was reported to the Board in November 2018.

- 4.1.2 Appendix 1 provides performance information for the first 9 months of 2018/19 and the previous two whole years. The objective being to update the valuation rolls accurately and quickly so that ratepayers and the levying authorities have accurate and up to date assessments for NDR purposes.
- 4.1.3 The challenge presented by the performance indicators agreed with the Scottish Government and reviewed by the Board is that they reflect the performance of 'the system' that includes ratepayers, landlords, surveyors, solicitors, as well as the Assessor, as these stakeholders have some role to play in changes to the valuation roll. To establish the performance of the Assessor's service within this wider system collection of internal statistics is required. An early analysis of monitoring information shows that for the first 9 months of 2018/19 over 80% of changes to the rolls were made within 90 days of the service receiving information that a change is required. Arrangements are being made to report this performance indicator regularly from 1 April 2019.
- 4.1.4 As previously reported, revaluation appeal resolution has been a major priority for the service. As at 31 December 2018, 4,313 of the 11,234 revaluation appeals lodged in relation to 10,099 properties have been resolved, this being 38.4% of the appeal caseload covering 35.5% of all properties under appeal. The appeal resolution rate relies not only on this service but also the capacity of the local valuation appeal panel and the agents who represent the appellant parties. Evidence suggests that the system is currently operating at its maximum capacity to deliver revaluation appeal resolution. The service also handled 3,014 running roll appeals in the 9 months to 31 December, this being six-fold increase in the volumes that would normally handle during inter-revaluation years.

4.2 Council Tax Valuation List

- 4.2.1 Appendix 2 provides the position for the first 9 months of 2018/19 and the previous two whole years.

The growth in the council tax valuation list has continued for the third quarter of 2018/19 and shows little sign of slowing down for the remainder of the year. Appeal volumes remain low with only 65 proposals lodged to alter a band as at 31 December 2018.

4.3 Developments

- 4.3.1 Since the Scottish Government set out its plans for NDR reform in December 2017¹, Assessors have been participating in the in the Barclay Implementation Advisory Group as the various individual reform measures are considered. Publication of the Group's report is anticipated early this year along with the Government's response to the consultation exercise that it conducted during 2018. These two documents will inform and add detail to the to the reforms, the direction and broad impact of 3 year revaluations and a one year tone date, having already been established.

¹ Non-domestic rates: Implementation plan in response to the Barclay review, 14/12/2017
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/barclay-review-of-non-domestic-tax-rates-implementation-plan/> , accessed 20/1/2019

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The service is continuing to work extremely hard to deliver on appeal resolution and routine maintenance of the valuation roll and valuation list whilst also assessing the means of meeting the challenges posed by the NDR reforms that will be implemented from April 2020.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Valuation Roll Performance Indicators as at 31 December 2018

| | Time Period | 2018/2019 (part year) | 2017/2018 | 2016/2017 |
|---|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Amendments within Time Periods | 0 - 3 Months | 1171 | 1699 | 1197 |
| The number of amendments made to the valuation roll during the year as a result of material change of circumstances and new subjects. | % | 67.2% | 66.0% | 56.2% |
| | <i>Threshold</i> % | 70.0% | 77.0% | 60.0% |
| | 3 - 6 Months | 280 | 427 | 401 |
| | % | 16.1% | 16.5% | 18.8% |
| The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Valuation Notice is issued. | <i>Threshold</i> % | 15.0% | 13.0% | 25.0% |
| | Over 6 Months | 290 | 450 | 531 |
| | % | 16.7% | 17.5% | 24.94% |
| | <i>Threshold</i> % | 15.0% | 10.0% | 15.0% |
| Number of Amendments | | 1,741 | 2,576 | 2,129 |
| Total Number of Entries | At 1 April | 29,305 | 26,036 | 25,267 |
| Total Rateable Value | At 1 April | £1,005.58M | £987.11M | £804.15M |

Appendix 2

Council Tax Valuation List Performance Indicators as at 31 December 2018

| | Time Period | 2018/2019 (part year) | 2017/2018 | 2016/2017 |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| New Entries within time periods The time period is the period between the effective date of the amendment and the date the corresponding Banding Notice is issued. | 0 - 3 Months | 2,612 | 2,949 | 3,070 |
| | % | 94.2% | 91.3% | 91.8% |
| | Threshold % | 94.0% | 94.0% | 94.0% |
| | 3 - 6 Months | 125 | 178 | 210 |
| | % | 4.5% | 5.5% | 6.3% |
| | Threshold % | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% |
| | Over 6 Months | 37 | 104 | 65 |
| | % | 1.3% | 3.0% | 1.9% |
| | Threshold % | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% |
| Number of new entries added The Actual number of new dwellings added to the Valuation List during the year. | | 2,774 | 3,231 | 3,345 |
| Total number of entries The actual number of properties shown in the Valuation List as at 1 April annually. | | 290,004 | 287,336 | 284,435 |
| Adjusted to Band "D" equivalent | Original ratios | 287,223 | 284,132 | 281,036 |
| | 2017 revised proportion ratios* | 301,483 | 298,888 | n/a |

**The Council Tax (Substitution of Proportion) (Scotland) Order 2016 altered the ratio between Band A and Band H from 1:3 to 1:3.675 with effect from 1 April 2017.*



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 February 2019

SUBJECT: Governance

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To consider the updates to the employment policy framework and the requirement to ensure that related party returns and registers of interest are maintained.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Board consider and approve the update on the employment policy framework for 2018 for Health & Work, recruitment and selection, code of conduct and smoking**
- 2.2 **The Board consider its procedures for identifying related parties within the annual accounts in relation to members and senior officers and approve the introduction of register of interests returns for senior officers.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Board's employment policy framework is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up-to-date in terms of legislative requirements, good practice and operational relevance. This year continued the previously agreed approach that policy work would be taken forward on a minimal basis with only essential amendments or developments being undertaken. Policies are reviewed initially through a desk-top exercise to establish the level of review required: minimal for essential updates, mid-level for more in-depth amendments or full where a change of approach is being considered.
- 3.2 The 2017/18 audit recommended that the Board review its procedures for identifying related parties to ensure that related party transactions are properly detected and disclosed in the annual accounts. It was also recommended that Board members should be reminded of the importance of maintaining their registers of interests and senior officers should be asked to complete a register of interests return.

4. Employment policy framework

- 4.1 The timetable for the planned policy review has been extended due to the acute demands being placed on the available resources. Appendix 1 provides the revised proposed policy framework.
- 4.2 Health and Work Policy (Appendix 2): There have been no legislative changes which have impacted on the current policy; clarification has been provided for when a short term absence develops in to long term absence, information on early intervention and self-help and use of hyperlinks for easier navigation around the policy document.
- 4.3 Recruitment and Selection policy and procedure (Appendices 3a and 3b): There were no legislative amendments required and the purpose of these documents remains the same in that their purpose is to match people to work. Layout has been streamlined, language and style modernised and the length of the policy and related procedure shortened to make them more user-friendly.
- 4.4 Code of Conduct (Appendix 4): Whilst there have been no changes to the 7 Key Principles of public life, the policy required updating to incorporate advice on engaging in public consultations hosted on social media, reference to the disciplinary process where there was failure to adhere to the code and enhanced information in relation to the Anti Bribery Act 2010 and implications for the workforce.
- 4.5 Smoking (Appendix 5): The policy has been refreshed to include reference to the use of e-cigarettes and now provides clarity for managers and employees alike.

5. Related party returns and Registers of Interest

- 5.1 Board members are required to maintain their entries in their registers of interests relevant to their constituent authorities.
- 5.2 Audit Scotland recommended that a review of procedures for identifying related parties within the annual accounts should be carried out to include both members and senior officers. This review will be conducted during February 2019 and reported to board members and senior officers with a view to senior officers completing a register of interests return annually.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Each year the Board's employment policy framework is reviewed to ensure that the policies remain up to date and relevant based on the Board's priorities.
- 6.2 The proposed review of the related party returns and registers of interests is a timely and necessary step to ensure the integrity of the annual accounts.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton

Schedule of Policy Review for GVJB**(updated) January 2019**

| POLICY | PREVIOUS REVIEW DATE | PRIORITY | PLANNED REVIEW DATE | Completed (Present to Board) |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Code of Conduct | 2008 | 1 | 2017 | 2018 (Jan 2019) |
| Health and Work | 2009 | 1 | 2017 | 2018 (Jan 2019) |
| Recruitment & Selection: | 2009 | 1 | 2017 | 2018 (Jan 2019) |
| Smoking | 2009 | 2 | 2017 | 2018 (Jan 2019) |
| Staff Review & Development Scheme | 2009 | 1 | 2018/19 | (Jun 2019) |
| Grievance Procedure | 2008 | 1 | 2018/19 | (Jun 2019) |
| Confidential Reporting | 2008 | 2 | 2018/19 | (Jun 2019) |
| Alcohol and Drug Use affecting work | 2009 | 2 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Long Service Award and Certification | 2009 | 2 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Eye Sight Testing | 2003 | 2 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Career Grade Scheme Overview | 2007 | 1 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Relocation Scheme | 2010 | 1 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Adoption Leave | 2009 | 2 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Special Leave | 2009 | 2 | 2019 | (Jan 2020) |
| Computer Use (this will encompass all entries related to IT) | 2013 - 2014 | 1 | 2020 | (Jan 2021) |
| Health and Safety Management | 2009 | 1 | 2020 | (Jan 2021) |
| Time off for Trade Union Duties | 2013 | 1 | 2020 | (Jan 2021) |
| Trade Union Officer Group Consultation | 2009 | 1 | 2020 | (Jan 2021) |
| Harassment | 2009 | 1 | 2020 | (Jan 2021) |
| Protocol for Consultation | 2009 | 2 | 2021 | (Jan 2022) |
| Disciplinary | 2008 | 1 | 2021 | (Jan 2022) |
| Records Retention, control & management | 2016 | 1 | 2021 | (Jan 2022) |
| Employee Consultation F/work | 2009 | 2 | 2021 | (Jan 2022) |
| Maternity leave, pay & benefits | 2009 | 1 | 2022 | (Jan 2023) |
| Parental Leave | 2009 | 1 | 2022 | (Jan 2023) |
| Parental, maternity support leave & pay | 2009 | 1 | 2022 | (Jan 2023) |

On completion of the schedule an ongoing rolling programme of review will continue

Grampian Valuation Joint Board Health and Work Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Grampian Valuation Joint Board recognises that the attendance at work of all employees is essential in the interests of the effective and efficient operation of the board's services. This policy sets out a pro-active approach to attendance, which recognises the shared responsibility of all board employees to optimise attendance at work.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all employees of Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The Grampian Valuation Joint Board values all of its employees and recognises the importance of maintaining the health and wellbeing of employees. We will provide systems of management, which actively promote and encourage mental and physical wellbeing at work.
- 2.2 The Board will assist employees to remain at work wherever possible, by offering appropriate support. Evidence has shown that it is in the best interests of an absent employee to return to work as early as health permits.
- 2.3 The Board recognises that a healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving low levels of absence and providing high quality services. It is therefore committed to developing occupational health and related services, and to promoting health at work, as measures to improve attendance levels at work.
- 2.4 All employees will be treated in a fair and consistent manner and are encouraged to seek help, at an early stage, with any problems which may result in them not being able to attend work. There is a responsibility upon employees to attend work and it is recognised that absence has a negative impact on service provision and work colleagues.
- 2.5 Levels of absence will be monitored regularly and appropriate management action will be taken within the terms of this policy.
- 2.6 Ill health retiral or termination of employment as a consequence of sickness absence will only be considered once an employee has been provided with all reasonable support and assistance and has been advised that continued absence may result in termination of employment.
- 2.7 The Board will ensure that adequate training and guidance is provided to all levels of management to develop the skills and competencies in respect of their responsibilities and the duty of care to promote fair and consistent practices in relation to absence.
- 2.8 The Board undertakes to ensure that all employees are made aware of their responsibilities under the Health and Work Policy.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

3.1 The Board expects the following:

Employees

- To care for their health and to seek medical help whenever appropriate
- To maintain attendance at work in accordance with the terms of this policy
- To keep their Line Manager fully informed of the position if they are unable to attend work
- To be aware of their responsibilities in terms of reporting sickness absence

3.2 **Line Managers** - have direct responsibility for managing health and wellbeing, in accordance with this policy. It is essential, therefore, that they are fully familiar with the Board's procedures for reporting, monitoring and managing sickness absence and for ensuring that their employees are aware of their responsibilities. Whilst the procedure advocates early intervention, there is also a focus on management decisions continuing to be made on a case by case basis taking account of prognosis, individual circumstances and service needs.

3.3 **The Management Team** must ensure that the terms of this policy are fully implemented within their areas of responsibility.

3.4 **Human Resources** will provide advice and support to those involved in the operation of this policy, and lead on the development of best practice and policy revision.

3.5 The **Trade Unions** will be fully consulted on revisions to the terms of this policy and will seek to represent members subject to these procedures. Employees will have the right of representation at all formal stages of these procedures.

3.6 If you require further clarification on the application of this policy, please contact your Line Manager, a member of the Management Team, Human Resources or a Trade Union for further advice.

4.0 SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WHILST AT WORK AND EARLY INTERVENTION

4.1 A pro-active approach to attendance at work will be taken, advocating the use of early intervention in order to prevent an employee from going off sick. If it is apparent that an employee is having difficulties at work, due to a health or domestic issue, the manager should assist wherever possible to try and support that employee at work for as long as possible. For example, if the employee has raised concerns of a domestic nature then a manager should advise the employee of the counselling service, or in consultation with a Depute Assessor, perhaps reduce the employee's hours on a temporary basis (during a short period of reduced hours, full pay will be maintained). In the event that relationships at work are considered to be contributing to the employees' difficulties, then it may also be appropriate to consider mediation.

4.2 Every option to assist the employee in remaining at work must be carefully considered and discussed with the employee. If the employee is unable to perform all of his/her duties then consideration will also be given to assistance with workload to ease the situation on a temporary basis.

4.3 There are provisions under the Special Leave policy and flexible working arrangements to enable employees to attend preventative medical examinations, without loss of pay. In addition, employees may be permitted to attend emergency dentist and doctor appointments if these fall within their normal working hours, with the prior agreement of their designated manager.

5.0 SICKNESS ABSENCE NOTIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION

- 5.1 There are clear responsibilities upon employees absent from work on account of sickness. The requirements for sickness absence notification and certification are set out in the Staff Handbook
- 5.2 Employees are reminded of the importance of adhering to these requirements, in order that the Assessor and ERO can effectively maintain service provision. Failure to do so may result in the non-payment of Occupational sick pay and management consideration of appropriate action.
- 5.3 Employees should note that their annual leave entitlement will normally be reduced as a result of absence extending beyond three months, subject to minimum leave requirements set out in employment legislation and national conditions of service.

6.0 RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSIONS

- 6.1 On the first day back at work (or as soon as reasonably practicable) after any period of sickness absence of an employee, the employee's line manager will arrange to meet informally with him/her. The discussion could be recorded on the return-to-work discussion template or in another format, the crux is that this contact takes place as it forms an essential part of sickness absence management and is crucial in supporting the employee and maximising attendance at work.
- 6.2 The discussion should take place face to face, however if service delivery does not allow then alternative methods are sufficient, for example by telephone. They should be conducted sympathetically and discreetly to form a constructive dialogue, demonstrating to the employee an acknowledgement of their return to work as well as an interest in their health and wellbeing. The manager may also wish to use this discussion as an opportunity to update the employee on any developments in the workplace. The discussion may also provide an opportunity to identify whether there are any issues that need to be addressed or support that can be provided in order to assist the employee in maximising attendance at work.
- 6.3 A note of such discussions should be kept by managers for future reference.

7.0 MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH ABSENT EMPLOYEES

- 7.1 As part of good management practice, the line manager will maintain regular contact with absent employees. The initial contact should be made early in the absence period in order to demonstrate the manager's concern for the employee's health and well-being. In addition, this presents the opportunity to discuss the likely duration of the absence and any support measures that can be put in place to assist a return to work. For longer term absences, it is useful to discuss the arrangements for keeping in touch.
- 7.2 All contact with absent employees should be handled sensitively and with consideration of the individual circumstances. Employees should also be given a minimum of five working days' notice of requests to attend meetings. By agreement, a home visit may also be relevant.
- 7.3 It may be appropriate, in exceptional circumstances, to agree an alternative nominated contact e.g. family member or close friend. Similarly, an alternative management contact

may also, in exceptional circumstances, be appropriate.

- 7.4 Records of discussions should be kept by the manager for future reference.

8.0 TRAINING FOR THOSE MANAGING ABSENCE CASES

- 8.1 The Board is committed to providing appropriate training for all those involved in the management of sickness absence. It is essential that the management of absence is handled sensitively and in accordance with the terms of this policy. Advice and support in terms of this policy will be provided by Human Resources.

9.0 DEALING WITH SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 9.1 It is incumbent upon managers to monitor and actively manage the attendance of all employees within their areas of responsibility.
- 9.2 The procedures set out in this section of the policy will be initiated after an employee has either been absent on **four separate occasions** or for **fourteen cumulative days** in a twelve month rolling period.
- 9.3 It is hoped that return to work discussions will already have identified any issues contributing to employee sickness absence. However, where an employee reaches the fourth period of sickness absence or fourteen cumulative days within twelve months a formal absence review meeting (FARM 1) will be convened.
- 9.4 The purpose of this meeting (FARM 1) is to discuss the reason(s) for the absences in more detail through a supportive manner, whilst also making the employee aware that their level of sickness absence is causing concern and is having an impact on service delivery.

**Formal
absence
review
meeting
1**

At the meeting, the reason(s) for sickness absence will be discussed in more detail to identify whether any support can be provided and/or measures that the employee can take to improve attendance at work. Consideration should also be given to any medical information available and whether a referral to Occupational Health or access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) may be appropriate. In addition, consideration should also be given as to whether an adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work could assist in improving attendance.

- 9.5 Should further absence(s) result in an employee reaching four separate periods of absence or fourteen cumulative days in any twelve month rolling period a referral to OH will be initiated if not already done. OH are a supportive mechanism whom provide advice and guidance on specific circumstances.
- 9.6 Upon receipt of the medical report a second absence review meeting (FARM 2) will be held with the employee in order to discuss the content therein. Human Resources are available to offer advice and support if required. In the event that an underlying medical condition is identified, it is important that discussions take place in order to agree an acceptable level of attendance at work with due cognisance to the condition in question and the impact on service delivery. For those with confirmed underlying medical conditions, the Board may be prepared to accept a higher level of sickness absence. Due consideration should be given to requirements under disability legislation. However, the employee in such cases must ensure that they take all possible steps in terms of lifestyle and medical intervention to maximise their attendance at work. It may also be relevant to consider redeployment if recommended by OH. A summary of these discussions and any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing by the manager

**Formal
absence
review
meeting
2**

following the meeting. A review period will be set in order that progress can be monitored. The further involvement of OH will be determined by the level of attendance at work that is achieved thereafter.

- 9.7 Where the OH report indicates there is no underlying medical condition, then the purpose of the meeting will be to advise the employee that their level of attendance remains unacceptable and consider what measures can be put in place to improve the situation. Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to the working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work or duties that could assist in an improvement in attendance.
- 9.8 The employee should be advised that, in the event that further absence/absences result in an employee reaching four separate periods of absence or fourteen cumulative days in a rolling twelve month period then it will be necessary to consider their continued employment. The employee will be provided with clear guidance in relation to the level of attendance that is expected.
- 9.9 Should further absence/s result in an employee continuing to reach four separate periods of absence or fourteen cumulative days in a twelve month rolling period, a third absence review meeting (FARM 3) will be held. The purpose of this meeting is to review progress towards acceptable levels of attendance. Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to the working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work or duties that could assist in an improvement in attendance. In addition, redeployment, if appropriate, should be fully explored at this point.
- 9.10 Again, the employee should be advised that, in the event that further absence/absences result in an employee reaching five separate absences in a twelve month period, it is likely that their employment will be terminated. The employee will be provided with clear guidance in relation to what level of attendance is expected.
- 9.11 In the event that further absence/absences result in an employee reaching four separate periods of absence or fourteen cumulative days in a twelve month period a capability hearing will be convened.
- 9.12 There may be occasions where initial short term sickness turns into long term sickness absence. Whilst the triggers differ, the overall principles of the policy remain the same regardless of whether they are managed under the short or long term process.

10.0 **DEALING WITH LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE**

- 10.1 Long term absence is regarded as any absence from work due to ill health that lasts four weeks or longer. During this period it is important the manager makes contact with the absent employee. Where an employee is absent for a period of **four weeks** and the fit note does not indicate an imminent return to work the absence should be managed in accordance with the guidance set out in this section of the policy.
- 10.2 It is particularly important to keep in touch with employees on long term sickness absence and the manager should keep a record of the contact, and any unsuccessful contact that has been made.
- 10.3 An initial absence review meeting (FARM 1) should be held towards the end of the four week period. The purpose of this meeting is to determine a plan for the management of the case including consideration of any medical information; the appropriateness of a referral to OH; and any adjustments to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in an early return. Arrangements for keeping in contact during the

**Formal
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3**

**Formal
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1**

absence should be agreed at this meeting.

- 10.4 A summary of the discussions and any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing by the manager following any absence review meeting.
- 10.5 A second absence review meeting (FARM 2) should be held within **three months** of the commencement of the absence. The purpose of this meeting is to consider progress towards a return to work and the content of the OH report and any recommendations therein, if appropriate. Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustments to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in an early return to work, ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to requirements under disability legislation. It may also be relevant to consider redeployment at this stage if recommended. The employee should be advised that, in the event that the absence is prolonged, and all other options have been fully explored, the Board would be looking to conclude the management of the case upon expiry of sick pay.
- 10.6 The manager will continue to maintain and document regular contact with the absent employee in the period following the meeting. This may include scheduling a further meeting to review progress or any new medical or other relevant information.
- 10.7 In the event that the employee has not returned to work within a **nine month period**, or sooner for those with shorter service, then a third absence review meeting (FARM 3) will be convened. Prior to this meeting a further appointment with OH will take place.
- 10.8 The purpose of this meeting is to review the employee's progress towards a return to work with due consideration to the content of the most recent OH report and any other relevant medical information. Again, it is relevant at this stage to discuss any adaptations to work or assistance that can be provided in order to facilitate a return to work. In addition, if recommended by OH, redeployment should be fully explored, during the next three month period. The possibility of ill-health retirement should also be fully explored during this period. Advice should be sought from Human Resources at this stage and attendance of an Adviser may be required.
- 10.9 It should be made clear to the employee at this meeting that in the event that the absence extends beyond the expiry of sick pay then it is likely that it will be necessary to consider the termination of their employment.
- 10.10 In the event that there is no likely imminent return to work, a capability hearing will be convened.

**Formal
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review
meeting
2**

**Formal
absence
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meeting
3**

11.0 ABSENCE REVIEW MEETINGS

- 11.1 Absence review meetings are a fundamental feature of this policy and will be convened where an employee's attendance at work gives cause for concern.
- 11.2 Employees will be provided with a minimum of five working days' notice of these meetings, and afforded the right of representation. Any documentation that will be referred to during the meeting should be issued to the employee in advance to allow adequate preparation.
- 11.3 These meetings should be conducted confidentially and in a sensitive manner. Managers should ensure that an appropriate meeting venue is arranged in advance and consideration is given to the nature of the employee's medical condition where appropriate.

12.0 **ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE AND PROVISION OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

- 12.1 The OH service provides managers with advice and support in managing employees with ill health, absence or injury. Specifically their role includes:
- Pre-placement health assessment – to ensure new employees are fit and able to undertake the duties of the post. This is only relevant to certain posts within the Board.
 - Medical referral/assessment – advise the Board, as requested, of an employee's fitness to carry out their duties and responsibilities, and whether appropriate support that can be provided to enable employees to undertake their work.
 - Health Surveillance – regular screening/checks for employees exposed to potential work related health risks.
 - Health Promotion – supporting any health initiatives, which aim to educate employees on how to maintain and/or improve general good health.
- 12.2 Human Resources will arrange appointments with the OH Service, who will advise the line manager of the arrangements for the appointment with the OH Adviser. The line manager must then advise the member of staff accordingly.
- 12.3 The line manager will provide the OH Adviser with relevant details, using the OH referral pro-forma including:-
- The employee's personal details – name, date of birth, home address, date of appointment to post.
 - A summary of the employee's main duties, a job description can also be useful.
 - The employee's sickness absence record with particular reference to the frequency, duration and reasons for absences
 - The reason for the referral and the questions they require to be answered
 - Any other information relevant to the employee's performance in their duties
 - Confirmation that the employee is aware of the reason for the referral.
- An additional information sheet can be appended to the form if further information requires to be added. A copy of the referral documents should be forwarded to Human Resources who will arrange for the referral to be made. A copy of this should also be provided to the employee.
- 12.4 In the event that an employee refuses to attend OH, a discussion with the employee will take place to establish the reasons for refusal, and reassure the employee of the benefits of this process. If necessary, the employee should be advised that there is a contractual obligation for them to attend and that the Board will have to manage their case without the benefit of OH advice if they refuse to attend.
- 12.5 The OH Adviser's report will allow the Manager to determine, in the best interests of the employee and the operational requirements of the service, what further course of action, if any, is appropriate. The employee will also receive a copy of this report.
- 12.6 The Board also aims to support attendance at work through a comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP can provide valuable support in the workplace, typically including counselling services, providing advice on issues such as debt

reduction and bereavement. The Board also aims to actively promote the concept of wellness at work.

13.0 CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO DISABILITY ISSUES

13.1 The Board is committed to ensuring that we meet our responsibilities arising from disability legislation. This includes consideration of reasonable adaptations to work that could assist employees in remaining or returning to work. Dependent upon the circumstances, there are a number of potential adaptations that could be considered either on a permanent or temporary basis, for example:

- adjustments to ways of working
- provision of additional or modified equipment
- adjustments to workplace, hours and/or times of work
- change of duties
- phased return to work etc.

14.0 REDEPLOYMENT

14.1 In the event that it becomes clear that an employee is unable to continue in their current role due to a health condition, then the Board's OH provider may recommend that redeployment be explored.

14.2 The Manager is responsible for establishing whether it is possible to redeploy an individual with the Assessor & ERO. This process may take several weeks and the employee should be advised that they also have a responsibility to identify possible redeployment opportunities that may be able to be taken forward.

14.3 The search for a redeployment opportunity will be based upon what is deemed appropriate in terms of the employee's skills, experience and medical capabilities. The Board has a relatively small establishment and thus is unable to guarantee that a suitable opportunity will be available and will only be able to review vacancies as they arise. It is important that the employee is fully participative in this process in order to maximise the possibility of sourcing a possible redeployment.

15.0 ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT

15.1 Depending on the circumstances of the absence, it may be appropriate for ill health retirement to be considered. It should be established whether or not the employee is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

15.2 For members of the LGPS, ill health retirement may apply where recommended by the Board's OH provider. Further information can be obtained from www.nespf.org.uk.

15.3 If the employee qualifies for retirement on the grounds of ill health, a range of information will be discussed with the employee, for example, likely date of retirement, notice period, annual leave entitlement, pension benefits the employee may be entitled to, if available.

16.0 CAPABILITY HEARING

- 16.1 A capability hearing will be convened following completion of all the stages outlined above and all possible alternative options have been fully explored.
- For long term absences the employee will have exhausted sick pay and there will be no likely imminent return to work.
 - For short term absences it is possible that the sick pay will not have been exhausted but this does not preclude progression to a capability hearing.
- 16.2 The purpose of a capability hearing is to review the employees continued employment. It is therefore important that the employee is fully aware that a likely outcome of the hearing is the termination of their employment with the Board.
- 16.3 A capability hearing will be chaired by a Depute Assessor who will ensure that full consideration is given to all circumstances of the case and that the employee is provided with adequate opportunity to present relevant information in support of their position. It is the role of the chairperson to ensure that they are satisfied that the Board has met its obligations in terms of gaining comprehensive and current medical advice; fully explored redeployment if deemed appropriate; provided due consideration to disability issues if appropriate; and that absence review meetings have been held as part of the management of the case.
- 16.4 The employee will have the right to representation at the hearing and a Human Resources Adviser will be in attendance. Documentation which will be referred to as part of the process will be issued to the employee at least five working days in advance of the hearing.

17.0 RIGHT OF APPEAL

- 17.1 Where an employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the capability hearing, they have the right to appeal to the General Purposes Sub-Committee.
- 17.2 A referral to the General Purposes Sub-Committee should be submitted in writing to the Clerk of the Board within fourteen days of confirmation of the decision at the hearing stage, specifying the grounds of appeal.
- 17.3 The Clerk of the Board will notify both the Assessor and the Head of HR of any appeal lodged, immediately upon receipt of the notification to appeal. The Head of HR, or their nominated senior representative will then contact both parties involved, i.e. the employee(s) or nominated TU Representative and the Assessor to request the submission of the details of their case, in order to prepare the necessary papers for the General Purposes Sub-Committee Meeting. With the agreement of both parties, the Head of HR shall arrange for mediation to take place with a view to resolving the Appeal without recourse to committee. The General Purposes Sub-Committee will hear the appeal in accordance with the agreed procedure.
- 17.4 The appeals process shall be exhausted after the Committee stage.

18.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Alcohol and Drug Use Affecting Work Policy
- Staff handbook
- Occupational Health management referral form
- Return to work discussion template
- Special Leave Policy

Template invite letters:

- Short Term FARM 1 invite letter
- Short Term FARM 2 invite letter
- Long Term FARM 1 invite letter
- Long Term FARM 2 invite letter

APPENDIX 1 MANAGING SHORT TERM ABSENCE – SUMMARY

| TRIGGER | ACTION | POSSIBLE OUTCOME |
|--|--|--|
| 4 separate absences or 14 cumulative days in 12 month period | <p><u>Formal absence review meeting 1</u></p> <p>The purpose is to discuss the reason for the level of absence and determine whether any support can be provided and/or measures the employee can take to improve attendance. Consideration should also be given to any medical information, OH referral, adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in improving attendance.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral to OH – determine whether underlying medical condition. Change to work place, hours, duties, etc. Mediation. Access to EAP. |
| 4 separate absences or 14 cumulative days in 12 month period | <p><u>Formal Absence review meeting 2</u></p> <p>The purpose is to advise the employee that their level of attendance remains unacceptable and consider what measures can be put in place to improve the situation.</p> <p>Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to the working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in an improvement in attendance.</p> <p>It may also be relevant to consider redeployment if recommended by OH.</p> <p>Where an underlying medical condition is identified the further stages of this process may not apply. Managers must be mindful of legislation related to disability.</p> <p>The employee should be advised that, in the event that absence levels remain at 5 or more absences in 12 month period then it will be necessary to consider their continued employment.</p> | <p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore redeployment if recommended by OH. A further meeting at an appropriate point to consider whether further medical information is available or necessary. Agreement reached on acceptable levels of attendance for those with confirmed underlying medical conditions. |
| 4 separate absences or 14 cumulative days in 12 month period | <p><u>Formal absence review meeting 3</u></p> <p>The purpose of this meeting is to review progress towards acceptable levels of attendance. Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptation to work that could assist in improving attendance levels. In addition, redeployment if appropriate should be fully explored, at this point.</p> <p>The employee should be advised that, in the event that absence levels remain at 5 or more absences in 12 month period it is likely that their employment will be terminated.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to work place, hours, duties etc. Explore redeployment, if appropriate. Further consideration by OH. Convene Capability Hearing. |
| 5 separate absences or 15 cumulative days in 12 month period | <p><u>Capability Hearing</u></p> <p>In the event that absence levels remain at 5 or more absences in 12 month period a Capability Hearing will be convened. However it is important to note that employees may have an adjusted trigger level so the agreed level may be more.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in attendance. Capability dismissal. |

Notes:

- The employee has a right of representation at each of these meetings.
- Human Resources will be available to offer advice where required.
- The employee will be advised of the purpose for each meeting in advance.
- A summary of the discussions and any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing by the manager following any of the review meetings.

Please refer to the full policy document for further guidance.

APPENDIX 2 MANAGING LONG TERM ABSENCE – SUMMARY

| TIMESCALES | ACTION | POSSIBLE OUTCOME |
|----------------|---|--|
| Within 4 weeks | <p><u>Formal absence review meeting 1</u></p> <p>The purpose is to determine a plan for the management of the case, including consideration of any medical information, OH referral, and adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in an early return to work. Arrangements for keeping in contact during the absence should be agreed at this meeting.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to OH. • Imminent return to work. • Change to work place, hour's duties, etc. • Mediation. • Access to EAP. |
| 3 months | <p><u>Formal absence review meeting 2</u></p> <p>The purpose is to consider progress towards a return to work and the content of the OH report and any recommendations therein, if appropriate.</p> <p>Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptations to work that could assist in an early return to work. Managers must be mindful of legislation related to disability. It may also be relevant to consider redeployment.</p> <p>The employee should be advised that, in the event that the absence is prolonged, the Board would be looking to conclude the management of the case upon the expiry of sick pay.</p> | <p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore redeployment if recommended by OH. • A further meeting at an appropriate point to consider any new medical or relevant information. |
| 6 months | Consideration of a further meeting to review progress or any new medical or other relevant information. | |
| 8 months | Further referral to OH following discussion with employee. | |
| 9 months | <p><u>Formal absence review meeting 3</u></p> <p>The purpose of this meeting is to review progress towards a return to work with due consideration to the latest OH report and any other medical information. Again, it is relevant to consider any adjustment to working pattern or reasonable adaptation to work that could assist in an early return to work. In addition, redeployment should be fully explored, if appropriate, during the next 3 months. The possibility of ill-health retirement should also be fully explored during this period.</p> <p>The employee should also be advised that, in the event that they have not returned to work by the expiry of sick pay, it is likely that their employment will be terminated.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imminent return to work. • Changes to work place, hours, duties etc. • Explore redeployment, if appropriate. • Ill-health retirement application/ further consideration by OH. • Convene Capability Hearing. |
| 12 months | <p><u>Capability Hearing</u></p> <p>In the event that there is no likely imminent return to work, a Capability Hearing will be convened.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imminent return to work • IHR pending • Capability dismissal |

Notes:

1. The employee has a right of representation at each of these meetings.
2. Human Resources will be available to offer advice where required.
3. The employee will be advised of the purpose for each meeting in advance.
4. A summary of the discussions and any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing by the manager following any of the review meetings.
5. The manager should maintain contact as agreed with the absent employee between review meetings.

Please refer to the full policy document for further guidance.

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board

1.0 STATEMENT OF POLICY

1.1 The purpose of the recruitment and selection policy is to ensure that The Board recruits the right employees, matching people to work:

- Fairly and efficiently;
- In line with agreed staffing levels;
- Within agreed recruitment and advertising budgets;
- To meet its operational requirements and strategic aims.

1.2 The policy aims to contribute to and support the contraction, when required, and re-shaping of The Board's workforce to achieve:

- A sustainable and skilled workforce for the future aligned to The Board's priorities, maximising the potential of current employees;
- Providing security of employment for those who want it;
- Minimising compulsory redundancies as far as possible.

1.3 The Board is committed to ensuring that:

- recruitment and selection incorporates the principles of equality and fair treatment of all job applicants
- the workforce reflects as far as possible minority groups within the local community where this contributes to facilitating the delivery of continually improving, efficient and effective services.

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all employees.

2.2 Procedures for recruitment to the Assessor and Depute Assessor posts are contained within the Recruitment Procedure for the Appointment of Senior Staff, which complements this policy and related procedures.

3.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3.1 The Board is committed to establishing an effective and appropriate workforce to enable the Assessor and ERO to achieve the operational requirements and strategic aims in relation to the valuation rolls, valuation lists and electoral

registers. It is the Board's policy that all recruitment and selection activities are based on the following principles:

- Selection for interview and appointment is based on the competencies, aptitude, potential and transferable skills of candidates, whilst also giving consideration to the skills, experience and abilities necessary to do the job;
- A range of tools may be used to determine the suitability of candidates for posts including psychometric tests, assessment against clearly defined competencies, interviews and practical tests and demonstrations when required;
- Opportunities are available for 'at risk' Board employees in the first instance, followed by encouraging internal movement for existing employees by advertising suitable vacancies internally, before moving to external adverts whilst still giving priority status to 'at risk' employees; please refer to the Internal Recruitment Policy
- Creative and cost-effective alternatives solutions are considered before filling posts and some posts may be frozen, amended or filled on a temporary basis as a result;
- All appointments are subject to Disclosure checks.
- Use of a robust and transparent selection process with measures in place to ensure no discrimination towards minority groups within the community;
- Disabled applicants who meet the minimum selection criteria for the job are guaranteed an interview;
- The Board works towards a workforce which matches, as closely as possible, the demographic make-up of the population of Grampian;
- All officers involved in the recruitment and selection process are suitably trained.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 All those involved in the recruitment and selection process are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves and adhering to the recruitment and selection policy;
- Carrying out recruitment fairly and without prejudice;
- Attending training as required;
- Keeping applicants' personal details confidential.

4.2 All managers are directly responsible for implementing this policy within their service areas and for the adherence of their staff to the policy.

4.3 All recruiting managers should receive training course on the corporate training programme before undertaking any recruitment activity

4.4 The Chair of the Recruiting Panel will ensure that the selection activity is carried out in accordance with The Board's policy and good recruitment practice

- 4.5 Recruiting managers should also ensure that administrative arrangements required to support the recruitment and selection process are made to ensure completion of each stage of the process within appropriate timescales.

6.0 COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 Applicants are advised of the Complaints Procedure in the Information for Applicants booklet.

Candidates are informed that in the event of a complaint they can refer the matter to the Assessor or the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

7.0 FURTHER SUPPORTING GUIDANCE AND DOCUMENTS

- Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- How To Guides:
 - How to write a job description
 - How to draft a recruitment advertisement
 - How to use competencies in recruitment
 - How to conduct an interview
 - How to interview candidates with disabilities
 - How to process interview notes
- Standard Forms:
 - Job Description template
 - Person Specification template
 - Rehabilitation of Offenders form
 - Reference (Character)
 - Reference (Employer)
 - Pre-Placement Health Questionnaire

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION PROCEDURES

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1 **Pre-Selection Stage**

1.1 Vacancy Review

Where appropriate a Notice of Termination form should be passed to Human Resources, Moray Council. The process for the recruitment of replacement staff will commence as agreed between the Assessor & ERO and relevant Depute. This may not always be immediately after Notice of Termination has been issued.

Before advertising a vacant or new post the Assessor & ERO should review the need for the vacancy and identify any existing or forthcoming developments that may affect the post. This should include a review of the Job Description and Person Specification for posts that become vacant and should incorporate consideration of how the post might be re-shaped to accommodate employees who might be displaced through periods of significant change or re-structures. This may take a number of forms e.g. adding hours from several posts together to form a full-time or near full-time post, considering the possibility of re-locating the post, and considering whether technological support and/or additional training would help enhance the role to make it more accessible for a larger number of employees.

Job descriptions describe the main purpose, tasks and responsibilities of a job. The person specification sets out the requirements of the ideal candidate, detailing both the minimum levels of qualification and experience and the main competencies required for safe and effective completion of the job, whilst also being used as a recruitment tool which reflects different and changing employment market conditions.

Recruitment documentation should clearly state that applicants have a responsibility to demonstrate how they fit the job requirements. Recruiting managers are encouraged to include appropriate wording to reflect this on the person specification (e.g. *It is for candidates to submit information in their application to demonstrate their competence at the required level*).

Further guidance is available in How to Write a Job Description.

1.2 Applications

The Assessor's PA (or admin support staff) will record all requests for application forms and will issue application forms and information packs.

Application forms will be returned to the Assessor and a formal acknowledgement of application will be sent to each applicant, except for those received very close to the closing date. Such applicants will be contacted in relation to 5.1.1.

Monitoring slips enclosed with application forms will be retained by the Assessor's PA / admin support staff and the details entered onto the summary spreadsheet passed to Moray Council Human Resources.

1.3 Equalities

The Board is committed to ensuring that no applicant receives less favourable treatment through having a protected characteristic as set out within the Equality Act 2010.

Applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy will be included on the short-list in line with the Disability Confident Committed Scheme.

1.4 Short-listing

1.7.1 General: Short-listing entails comparing what has been written on the application forms with the requirements set out in the person specification. Guidance on the use of competencies in recruitment is contained within a separate How To guide. Under normal circumstances the short-listing process will be completed within 5 – 10 working days of the closing date.

Applications must be compared against the essential factors of the person specification. The short-list may be further refined by reference to the desirable factors. The short-listing process, although structured by establishing whether a candidate meets either the essential or desirable criteria or both, does require an element of judgement and discretion by the short-lister(s). It is important to keep clear notes of why decisions have been made and what information, taken from the application form, has been used in the decision making process. Unsuccessful candidates should be notified that they have been unsuccessful within 2 weeks. Decisions, with justification, should be recorded so that candidates can be given feedback if required.

Wherever reasonably practicable, a short-listing panel member should not participate in the selection process where he/she is aware that a previous complaint, in respect of recruitment and selection, is unresolved or is pending against him/her.

Under no circumstances should any employee of The Board participate in the selection procedure where a relative, partner or close friend has applied for the vacancy, unless they have been ruled out at an earlier stage in the proceedings.

It is recommended that between 6 and 8 candidates are short-listed per vacant post. If no applicants fulfil the essential criteria, or the short-listing panel considers that there has been insufficient response, the vacancy may

be re-advertised., following discussion with the Assessor & ERO and relevant Depute

1.5 References

The purpose of a reference is to obtain factual information about a prospective employee/postholder and opinions about their character and suitability for a job. The factual information is straightforward and essential and includes confirming the nature of the position, length of service and reason for leaving. It is not permissible to ask questions about someone's sickness absence record, and caution should be used if requesting opinions about character and suitability as these are generally subjective judgements and not verifiable.

References must relate to a minimum period of 3 years prior to the closing date for applications for the post in question. The reference must relate to the most recent or current employer. In certain circumstances, where a candidate has not worked in a specific field for some time, it may be necessary to obtain a further reference from the most relevant employer, as well as the most recent or current one.

When requesting references, the 'Request for References' form should be accompanied by the relevant job description, person specification and covering letter or email. Additional information may be requested particularly for more senior or specialist posts.

Verbal reference must be followed up in writing.

1.6 Qualifications

Where the post requires possession of academic qualifications, a particular professional qualification, or registration with a particular body, this should be indicated on the invitation to interview letter or email and original paper worked checked and recorded on the Interview Assessment form at the interview stage. Recruiting managers should ensure that any recruitment documentation allows for consideration of equivalent levels of qualification to minimise the likelihood of inadvertent discrimination.

1.7 Illegal Working

Section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 requires all employers in the United Kingdom to make basic document checks on every person they intend to employ. By making these checks, employers can be sure they will not break the law by employing illegal workers. When making checks to prevent illegal working, racial discrimination must be avoided. The best way to do this is by treating all candidates in the same way so, in the invitation to interview letter candidates should be advised to bring their passport with them to the interview to be checked and copied. Candidates without a passport should bring their National Insurance Card and their original birth certificate.

1.8 Salary Placing

In normal circumstances an offer of employment to a successful interview candidate will be to the first point of the grade for the post. The Assessor & ERO has the discretion, in consultation with Moray Council Human Resources to agree a placing higher up the grade.

In considering requests for placements above the first point, regard will be given to:

- the placing of existing staff with comparable experience and qualifications
- the experience the candidate will bring
- the need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances
- equal opportunities implications

For posts with a career progression scheme in place, salary placing will be in accordance with the criteria for qualifications and experience within that scheme.

1.9 Quick Start

Quick start is an adapted process that condenses the standard recruitment and selection procedures and is suitable for use in the following circumstances:

- (a) Secondment (available to internal candidates only)
- (b) Additional Hours – greater than or equivalent to 20% of post holder's current hours per week
- (c) Change of contract type from:
 - Relief to Permanent
 - Relief to Fixed Term
 - Fixed Term to Permanent where the post holder has less than 12 months service

Features of Quick Start:

- (a) No application form is required, although it is recommended that managers request from prospective candidates a brief outline of their main skills, experience, competencies and reasons why they should be considered;
- (b) Verbal references are sufficient as long as one is from the post holder's current line manager and a record is kept that satisfactory references have been obtained;

- (c) Sight of qualifications is only required where they have not been previously scrutinised (e.g. where they have been acquired since being employed with The Board);
- (d) The selection process may proceed with small numbers (or one) candidate dependent on the recruiting manager being able to evidence suitable communications to relevant groups of employees regarding the opportunity;
- (e) The process can be restricted to a limited number or group of staff and should be fair and equitable;
- (f) Proof of eligibility and Disclosure checks (where appropriate) are still required.

Please note: the use of Quick Start must be authorised by the Assessor & ERO and HR advice sought prior to being advertised.

1.10 Targeted Recruitment

The Board's workforce is made up from the Grampian community and surrounding area. Although ideally the workforce demographics would aim to reflect the local community this is not always possible in practice. At times, the Board may therefore operate a policy of targeted recruitment aimed at boosting the workforce in a particular area, generally undertaken for defined periods of time to address specific issues that may otherwise impact on the Board's ability to sustain service delivery in certain areas.

1.11 Solution-focused Recruitment

From time to time and for a number of reasons, there may be difficulties in recruiting to specific staff groups. During such periods, managers are encouraged to consider a variety of ways to fill posts, avoiding the temptation of a short-term 'quick fix'.

- (a) Look at the job and candidate specifications and check they are reasonable and realistic. Make sure you are not setting unnecessarily high criteria. Check that all of the aptitudes and competencies being sought are really necessary for the job. Can these be prioritised and some even dropped as non-essential?
- (b) Decide whether the job advert profile on myjobscotland has been written to achieve maximum impact. Does it excite the applicants? Will it get readers recommending the job to their contacts?
- (c) Explore all markets for candidates. Have you considered females who are returning to work or even former employees? Have you considered advertising in local shops and community areas?

- (d) You could consider checking for shortlisted but unsuccessful candidates from other similar positions? Having been unsuccessful once, they might be reluctant to apply again but could be ideal for the job.
- (e) Look at the selection process. It may be possible to set up a recruitment event in the local community that will attract more candidates. Recruitment events can be organised so that the application form is completed and people are interviewed on the same day and the process is less protracted.
- (f) Review the structure of the team/section that is seeking to fill the vacancy. Would a change allow the role to be shaped in a different way to perhaps make it more attractive to internal candidates? Think about possibly re-training current staff so that they can absorb some of the vacant job responsibilities. It may also be possible to split some of the responsibilities. Involve the team and the line manager in these discussions, however sensitive. When you really think about it, you may not need to fill this position permanently. There may even be a headcount saving to be had.
- (g) Is it possible that the job could be filled on an assignment basis? Consider "interims", a job share or two part time workers rather than one full time appointment or as a fixed-term contract?

2 **Selection Stage**

2.1. Selection Methods

There are a number of selection techniques which may be considered for the assessment and selection of candidates:

2.1.1 Interviews:

General: the panel interview is one of the most frequently used selection techniques and may be undertaken in combination with other methods or used as the sole selection method.

Competency based interviewing uses different techniques than traditional interviewing. Where a recruiting manager is not familiar with and/or has not had experience of competency based interviewing, they are responsible for ensuring they read the How to Use Competencies in Recruitment guidance.

Further guidance for interviewers is provided in How to Conduct a Selection Interview and How to Use Competencies in Recruitment.

2.1.2 Practical Tasks/Tests:

Practical tasks and/or tests are generally acceptable for manual and word processing skills. Any practical task or test used as part of the selection process should measure the skills or attributes identified as necessary to do

the job. Skills not required of the job should not be a necessary requirement in order to complete a particular test. For example, a test should not require understanding of complex vocabulary or performance at speed, unless these are relevant to the job.

Consideration must also be given to the context in which the skill is to be measured. This should, as far as possible, reflect the type of content found in the job. Care must be taken not to include material that might put external applicants at an unfair disadvantage.

The level of difficulty at which the skill is to be measured also needs to be considered. A test that is too easy will not differentiate between applicants. One that is too difficult could lead to greater disparate impact.

Care must be taken with people whose first language is not English, to ensure that they have understood any instructions properly.

2.1.3 Presentations:

Candidates may be asked to give a short presentation to the panel based on information supplied to them or on an issue relevant to the post. This is a particularly useful way of evaluating their ability to draw out the crucial points from complex information and communicate them effectively. When developing this form of assessment consider the following:

- This type of assessment should only be used where presentation skills have been identified as required criteria within the Person Specification
- Will the candidates be asked to prepare a presentation in advance of the interview date or be required to make a presentation based on information provided on the day? Each approach has relevance for the assessment of different skills, so agree in advance which you are seeking to assess.
- Ensure that all candidates are informed in advance of the facilities which will be available to them including equipment, preparation time, time available to present, whether there will be a questions and answers within the allocated time etc as relevant.
- Assess all elements of the task and the facilities to ensure that this assessment will not directly or indirectly disadvantage any group of potential candidates.

2.1.4 Written assignments

Written assignments are useful for assessing a candidate's written communication skills as well as critical thinking, appraisal and synthesis skills. They can be as simple or complex as required for different posts but care must be taken that they are not based so closely on organisational situations that they exclude external candidates from being able to complete them as fully as internal candidates might do.

2.1.5 In-tray exercises

In-tray exercises enable employers to test a wide range of skills and aptitudes in situations that closely resemble those candidates might face in a real workplace: as a result, how candidates behave during an in-tray exercise can offer an accurate and reliable indication of their characteristics and behaviours. They are very good at seeing how candidates will cope with the real-world stresses of diary management and prioritisation.

Most in-tray exercises are designed to test a particular set of key competencies. In general terms, in-tray exercises test ability to (a) demonstrate the level of knowledge appropriate to the job (b) display the skills necessary for the job; and (c) show that attitudes are a good fit for those specified for the role.

The basic idea of in-tray exercises is to place candidates in a realistic although simulated work situation, and to assess their workplace behaviour and attitudes in that context. Whatever the topics covered, and whatever the nature of the fictional job, all in-tray exercises assess ability to sort through, take in and analyse complex information efficiently even under pressure of time; ability to explore and identify key issues and prioritise work accordingly; and ability to communicate effectively about the decisions made and to identify any special problems or issues that arise from the set of tasks and documents given. Candidates are also assessed on how clearly and effectively they can explain their decisions and actions.

2.1.6 On the job assessment

On occasion it may be that an 'on the job' assessment is the best way to assess candidates for a job. It is unlikely that this approach would be suitable for vacancies with a large number of applicants.

2.2 Administrative arrangements:

- (a) Candidates who have been short-listed should be invited to interview within 10 working days (two weeks) of the closing date. Any delay in the process requires a written acknowledgement of the applications to the candidates to keep them informed;
- (b) A reception facility and a waiting area should be organised for candidates;
- (c) The interview panel will normally consist of a designated officer and at least one other appropriate manager/supervisor (i.e. normally an officer who is not graded at the same or lower grade than the vacancy itself);

- (d) Managers should not normally conduct an interview alone and no officer should be involved in making an appointment where a relative, partner or close friend is involved;
- (e) Preparation is crucial for the success of the interview process and a prior meeting of the interview panel should be held to discuss key areas relating to job descriptions, person specifications, questions to be asked, in which order and by whom, post interview arrangements, etc;

Prior to the start of the interviews, the interview panel members should ensure they have:

- application forms
- job description
- person specification (including competencies)
- interview assessment forms
- references (if Safer Recruitment)
- prepared questions or areas for discussion
- terms and conditions of the job

3.0 Post-Selection Stage

3.1 Successful Candidate

3.1.1 General: Once a decision has been reached, the successful candidate will be offered the appointment by the recruiting manager either verbally in person or by telephone, or in writing using a standard Offer of Position letter as soon as is practicable following consultation with the Assessor & ERO.

Upon confirmation of acceptance of the offer, a Notification of Appointment form should be completed and signed by the Assessor or Depute and forwarded to the Moray Council Human Resources where a Contract of Employment outlining the main terms and conditions of the appointment will be prepared and issued. The contract should ideally be issued before the commencement of employment.

3.2 Unsuccessful Candidates

3.2.1 General: Unsuccessful candidates should be informed by email via myjobscotland (or by telephone call or in writing by the administrative support of the recruiting manager for paper-based applicants) as soon as practicable after the interview. Notification should take place no later than 5 days from the date of interview. Whenever possible, unsuccessful candidates should be notified on the same day as the successful candidate but may be held until

after the successful candidate accepts the position, provided this does not cause undue delay.

3.2.2 In a redundancy situation every effort will be made to find alternative employment for employees identified as “at risk”. This may mean a vacancy is not released for general advertisement until “at risk” employees have been considered. Please refer to the Internal Recruitment Policy.

Redeployment may also be relevant on health grounds and vacancies may also be prioritised for this purpose.

3.3 Records

3.3.1 General: All documentation relating to the recruitment must be retained for a minimum of 6 months within the department as it may be required for any subsequent complaint. Records include all application forms and all correspondence relating to the vacancy (e.g. advertisement, job description, person specification, questions asked at interview, responses from candidates, interview assessments, references and notes taken by the interviewing panel).

3.3.2 Applications for the successful candidate are held by the Assessor & ERO in the employee’s personal file.

3.4 Expenses

Candidates called for interview will be reimbursed travel expenses on the basis of second class travel to the location of the interview. Where it is impractical for rail travel, applicants should be paid at the public transport mileage rate. Details of current allowances are in the Relocation Scheme.

3.5 Relocation

Assistance with relocation may be offered where appropriate in accordance with the provisions of the Board’s Relocation Scheme. It is the recruiting manager’s responsibility to ensure they are familiar with the Relocation Scheme and when it applies. Where the situation is unclear, advice may be sought from the Moray Council Human Resources.

4 General

4.1 Medical checks

For appointments requiring medical clearance, departments must seek the advice of the Occupational Health Service in ascertaining the health of prospective employees, using the Health Questionnaire

4.2 Disclosure Scotland

All appointments will be subject to a Basic Disclosure check and it will be made clear in all relevant documentation, e.g. person specification and will be requested in the event that an individual is made a conditional offer of employment.

4.3 Complaints

Applicants are advised of the Complaints Procedure in the Information for Applicants booklet.

Candidates are informed that, in the event of a complaint, they can refer the matter to the Head of Moray Council HR & ICT or the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Relevant Documentation

Recruitment and Selection Policy

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board

Code of Conduct for Employees

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees of the Board. You must meet those expectations by ensuring your conduct is above reproach. It is your responsibility to make sure you are familiar with the provisions of this Code and that your actions comply with it. However, no written information can provide for all circumstances and if you are uncertain about how the Code applies, you should seek advice from your line manager, Personnel Services (Moray Council), or your trade union representative. This Code incorporates existing policies, regulations and conditions of service and provides further guidance on the minimum standards of conduct expected of Board employees.
- 1.2 In addition to the general Code, there may be professional standards and rules related to your particular area of work which you must also comply with (eg RICS).
- 1.3 The Code does not affect your rights and responsibilities under the law; its purpose is to provide clear and helpful advice. Because of the nature of their work, parts of the Code may apply to some employees more than others, but all employees must comply with the Code.
- 1.4 A breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Board's Disciplinary Procedures. Employees are reminded of the Bribery Act 2010 where it is an offence to offer, promise, or give a financial or other advantage to another person.
- 1.5 Employees are reminded of the Bribery Act 2010 where it is an offence to offer, promise, or give a financial or other advantage to another person.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This Code shall apply to all Board employees.

3.0 Key Principles of the Code

- 3.1 The general principles upon which this Code of Conduct is based are:-
 - **Selflessness:** You should not take decisions, which will result in any financial or other benefit to yourself, your family, or your friends. Decisions should be based solely on the public and Board's best interests.
 - **Integrity:** You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation, which might reasonably be thought to influence you in your work for the Board.
 - **Objectivity:** Any decisions which you take in the course of your work for the Board must be based solely on merit, including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending valuation adjustments or banding changes.

- **Accountability:** You are accountable for your decisions and actions to the Board as your employer. The Board, in turn, is accountable to the public.
- **Openness:** You should be as open as possible in all the decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for decisions and should not restrict information unless this is clearly required by Board policy, by the law or when public interest demands.
- **Honesty:** You have a duty to act honestly. You must declare any private interests relating to or which might affect your work with the Board.
- **Leadership:** If you are in a managerial position, you must promote and support these principles by leadership and example to maintain and strengthen the trust and confidence in the integrity of the Board and its employees.
- **Respect:** You must respect all other Board employees, Members and users of Board services and treat them with courtesy at all times.

4.0 Relationships

4.1 The Public

You may have access to the public as users of services or as citizens. Each member of the public should be dealt with fairly, equitably and consistently to ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

4.2 Board Members

You must respect all Board Members and the role they play and treat them with courtesy at all times. It is expected that Members will show the same consideration in return.

Both Members and employees are servants of the public but their responsibilities are distinct: Members are responsible to the electorate and serve only as long as their term of office lasts. Recognising the statutory position of the Assessor & ERO, their role is to determine policy outside the statutory frameworks of Lands Valuation and Electoral Registration. Employees are responsible to the Board and their job is the direct operational management and delivery of the services provided by the Board.

Mutual respect between Members and employees is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between individual Members and employees can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other Members and employees.

You should follow the practice detailed in the Protocol for Relations between Members and employees attached at **Appendix A**.

4.3 Contractors

You must be fair and impartial in your dealings with contractors, sub-contractors

and suppliers. If you are involved in the tendering process you must follow the Board's procedures and rules about tenders and contracts.

If you have access to confidential information on tenders or costs, you must not disclose that information to any unauthorised individual or organisation.

4.4 Conflicts of Interest

You must not allow any private interest, financial or non-financial, to influence your decisions.

You must also not use your position to further your own interests or the interests of others who do not have a right to benefit under the Board's policies.

You may have a private interest which relates to your work for the Board. That interest may be a financial one or one that a member of the public might reasonably think could influence your judgement. In addition, close family members or people living in your household may have financial interests in the work of the Board. All such interests must be declared to your line manager/supervisor and subsequently passed to the Principal Administration Officer for recording in a register of staff interests.

If you are a member of an organisation or club (eg School Board, Community Council, PTA etc) and membership might result in a conflict of interest in relation to any aspect of your work with the Board, you should declare this interest to your line manager/supervisor who, in turn, should pass the details to the Principal Administration Officer. This applies equally to membership of organisations or clubs, which are not open to the public (eg Freemasonry). You need only declare interests which relate to your work with the Board.

If you declare an interest, you will not normally be required to continue to work or take decisions relative to this interest. In certain circumstances, your activities outside work may be restricted due to your employment, eg political or commercial activities.

4.5 Confidentiality

The Board's decision making process must be as transparent and open as possible and this should be the basis on which you normally work. The Board must provide the public with clear and accessible information about how it operates.

There are exceptions, however, to the principle of openness where confidentiality is involved, and information may be withheld if, for example, it would compromise a right of personal or commercial confidentiality or Board Policy. This does not apply where there is a legal duty to provide information. If there is any doubt you should raise the matter with your line manager/supervisor. You must not break the law in this area. The provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 are relevant in this regard.

4.6 Employment outside the Board

The Board will normally allow employees to undertake paid employment outside the Board unless there is a clear conflict of interest, or it is likely to have an adverse

effect on the work of the Board. Employees should seek advice from their line manager/supervisor if they are in doubt and, where approval is given, details should be forwarded to the Assessor & ERO, for retention in personnel files and a copy will be forwarded to Moray Council for retention.

Any fees, commissions or other payments received by an employee as a consequence of their acting as an officer of the Board shall, unless otherwise directed by the Board, be paid to the Board.

4.7 **Gifts and Hospitality**

You may occasionally be placed in a position where you have to decide whether or not to accept offers of gifts or hospitality from organisations or businesses associated with the Board. It is essential that any suggestions of improper influence should be avoided.

The general rule should be to refuse, tactfully, offers or gifts from businesses, organisations, or individuals who are associated with, or wish to be associated with the Board commercially. Gifts should also be refused from organisations or individuals seeking, or at some stage in the near future may be expected to seek, a particular decision or action from the Board or the Assessor & ERO.

In certain circumstances, hospitality or gifts not exceeding £30 in value may be accepted, but you should refuse repeated gifts or hospitality from the same source.

In any event, **all** offers of gifts and hospitality should be notified to your line manager/supervisor who will forward the information to the Principal Administration Officer for recording in a register of gifts and hospitality. This recording mechanism will enable the Board to respond to any queries on such issues.

When making a visit to inspect domestic or non-domestic property or to attend meetings, you must ensure that the Board pays for the cost of these visits.

4.8 **Corruption**

It is important that employees are aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing anything, or for showing favour or disfavour to any person, in the course of their work with the Board.

4.9 **Use of Financial Resources**

You must ensure that any public funds entrusted to you are used in a responsible and lawful manner. You must strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Board.

4.10 **Use of Other Resources**

You are not permitted to use materials, equipment or resources of the Board for outside employment or for personal benefit without the permission of the Board. In particular, employees with access to a computer should make themselves aware of the relevant policy and associated documents on its use including internet and e-mail access.

4.11 **Appointments**

The Board has Recruitment and Selection Policies which set out the basic principles which must be taken into consideration to enable the Board to achieve a corporate and consistent approach in the critical area of recruitment and selection and to comply with employment legislation and associated codes of practice. All appointments must be carried out fairly and openly and candidates appointed on the basis of merit.

If you are involved in the recruitment and selection process and have any kind of relationship which might affect your ability to be impartial, that relationship must be declared to the Assessor & ERO, who will decide whether you can participate in the process. The same procedure must be followed in other personnel procedures such as grievance or disciplinary procedures or job evaluation.

You must not lobby Members or colleagues either directly or indirectly to secure personal appointment or promotion, or the appointment/non-appointment or promotion of another person. Any employee who has been lobbied by an applicant, a colleague or any other person must report the matter immediately to the Assessor & ERO.

4.12 **Contacts with the Media**

All contact with the media should normally be directed through the Assessor & ERO. Designated officers may, however, speak to the media on issues related to their direct area of responsibility. Designated officers are limited to staff with statutory Depute status except in exceptional circumstances. Staff below the level of Assistant Assessor are unlikely to have direct contact with the media.

4.13 **Public Statements**

Outside work, you are entitled to express your views about the Board provided you do not make use of any private information gained through your work with the Board. But, in your work capacity, you must not criticise the Board either through the media or at a public meeting, or in any written communication with members of the public. This includes responding to public consultations the Board hosts on social media, for example Facebook or Twitter.

Employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Board's work are referred to the Confidential Reporting ("Whistleblowing") Policy.

4.14 **Political Neutrality and Services to Members**

The public expects employees of the Board to undertake their duties in a politically neutral manner and this must be respected by Members. The political activities of a small number of employees are restricted by law.

Employees must serve the Board and all Members regardless of their political outlook. The Assessor & ERO and senior officers have ultimate responsibility to help ensure that the policies of the Board are implemented. All employees must implement the Board's policies irrespective of their personal views.

In the event of an employee receiving a request from a Member to provide assistance with a matter which is clearly party political or which does not have a clear link with the work of the Board, the employee should refer the matter to their line manager/supervisor who, if necessary, should report the matter to the Assessor & ERO for clarification.

Some senior employees may from time to time require to have a close working relationship with Members or Councillors of the major political group(s) of the constituent councils. Political groups may sometimes seek advice from employees of the Board particularly in relation to electoral matters.

The following procedures will assist employees who may be requested to give advice to political groups:-

- The political group's office bearer must first approach the Assessor & ERO
- They must tell the Assessor & ERO what type of advice they are seeking.
- The Assessor & ERO will decide whether the advice can be given, when and by which employee.
- If attendance at a meeting is involved, the employee must leave after giving the advice and before any decision is taken.
- The employee must observe strict confidentiality. The discussion in one political group or Council should not be disclosed to another political group or Council or to any member of such a group or another Council.

5.0 The Rights of the Employee

5.1 Public Statements

As citizens, employees are entitled to express their views about the Board, provided they do not make use of any private information gained through their work with the Board. They should not, in their working capacity, or as a result of their employment relationship, criticise the Board either through the media or at a public meeting, or in any written communication with members of the public.

5.2 Access to Councillors

As citizens, employees are entitled to raise any complaints which they may have about the constituent Council's services with their Councillor or via the Council's Complaints Procedure. Complaints relating to any aspect of your employment with the Board should be raised with your line manager/supervisor or via the Board's Grievance Procedure or Harassment Policy.

5.3 Fair and Reasonable Treatment at Work

Employees are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment from their colleagues, managers and Board Members. If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or have been discriminated against, you are entitled to make use of the appropriate Board policies and procedures (eg Grievance Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure, or Harassment at Work Policy).

There may be rare occasions when an employee feels that they have been required by a colleague, a Board Member, a member of the public, or an organisation to act in a way which might be illegal, improper or unethical, or which is otherwise in conflict with the principles of this Code or the procedures of the Board. Employees are referred to the Board's Confidential Reporting ("Whistleblowing") Policy for dealing with such concerns, which includes the following steps:-

- Raise concerns with your immediate line manager/supervisor.
- If you feel you cannot discuss the matter with your line manager/supervisor then the matter should be reported to the Principal Administration Officer who acts as the Board's Confidential Reporting Officer, or directly to the Assessor & ERO.
- The Principal Administration Officer, following consultations as appropriate, with the Assessor & ERO or other Senior Officers, will determine what action should be taken.

6.0 Associated Documents

6.1 Readers are also referred to the following policies and procedures:-

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Confidential Reporting ("Whistleblowing") Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection: Policy and Procedures
- Harassment at Work Policy

APPENDIX A

A PROTOCOL FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND EMPLOYEES IN SCOTTISH COUNCILS**1. Principles**

- 1.1 This protocol sets out the way in which Councils and employees of Councils should behave towards one another. It does not cover all the variety of circumstances which can arise, but the approach which it adopts will serve as a guide to dealing with other issues as they come up. **Although the Board is not a Council, the protocol is appropriate for Board Members and employees and should be read in that context.** The protocol is also relevant in respect of relations between employees and the Councillors of the constituent authorities.
- 1.2 Councillors and employees should work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, with neither party seeking to take unfair advantage of their position.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The commonest contacts are between Councillors and senior employees at Chief Executive, Director or Head of Service level and this protocol is very largely about those contacts. There are also many contacts between Councillors and other employees in their daily business and the principles of this protocol also apply to them.

3. Members' and Employees' roles

- 3.1 Within a Council, Councillors have a number of different roles, all of which call for separate consideration. Some Councillors are chairs of Committees, most belong to political groups and all have a local constituency to represent.
- 3.2 Legally, employees are employed by the Council and are accountable to it. Ultimately they serve the Council as a whole and not any particular political group, combination of groups or any individual member. Nonetheless, political groups exist in most Councils and employees may properly be called upon to assist the deliberations of political groups and also to help individual members in their different roles. Chief Executives and senior officers have ultimate responsibility to ensure that the Council's responsibilities are implemented.

4. Office Bearers

- 4.1 It is clearly important that there should be a close professional working relationship between the chair of a Committee and the Director and other senior employees of any service which reports to that Committee. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into

question employees' ability to deal impartially with other Councillors and the ability of chairs to deal impartially with other employees.

- 4.2 The chair of a Committee will often be consulted on the preparation of agendas and reports. Employees will always be fully responsible for the contents of any report submitted in their name and have the right to submit reports to Members on their areas of professional competence. While employees will wish to listen to the views of Conveners, they must retain final responsibility for the content of reports.
- 4.3 Committee chairs are recognised as the legitimate elected spokesperson on their Committees' areas of responsibility. Where authority is delegated to employees they will often wish to consult chairs of Committees about the action which they propose to take but the responsibility for the final decision remains with the employee who is accountable for it. Chairs should bear this in mind when discussing proposed action with employees.
- 4.4 Committee chairs will have many dealings with employees within a service. Those employees should always seek to assist a Committee chair but it must be remembered that they are ultimately responsible to the head of the service.

5. Political Groups

- 5.1 Most Councils operate through a system of groups of Councillors, many of them based on political affiliation. All employees must, in their dealings with political groups and individual members, treat them in a fair and even-handed manner. Employees must at all times maintain political neutrality.
- 5.2 The support provided by employees can take many forms, ranging from the meeting with the chair and vice chair before a Committee meeting to a presentation to a full party group meeting. Whilst in practice such support is likely to be in most demand from whichever party group is for the time being in control of the Council, it should be available to all party groups. The advice given by employees to different party groups should be consistent.
- 5.3 Certain matters must, however, be clearly understood by all those participating in this type of process, Councillors and employees alike. In particular:-
 - Council rules about groups' access to employees, eg all requests being approved by the Chief Executive, must be followed.
 - Employee support in these circumstances must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business. The observance of this distinction will be assisted if employees are not expected to be present at meetings or parts of meetings, when matters of party business are to be discussed.
 - Party group meetings, whilst they form part of the preliminaries to Council decision-making, are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not therefore rank as Council decisions and it is essential that they are not interpreted or acted upon as such.

- Where employees provide information and advice to a party group meeting in relation to a matter of Council business, this cannot act as a substitute for providing all necessary information and advice to the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee when the matter in question is considered.
- Political groups need to recognise that information and advice given by employees should be used to enhance discussion and debate at Council and Committee meetings. If such information is used for political advantage, for example media briefings beforehand, then the process could become devalued and place employees in a difficult position in giving information and advice.
- The chair of a political group meeting attended by employees has a responsibility for ensuring that those attending are clear on the status of the meeting and the basis on which employees are attending.

5.4 Special care needs to be exercised whenever employees are involved in providing information and advice to a meeting of a political group which includes persons who are not members of the Council. Such persons will not be bound by the Codes of Conduct for Councillors and employees (in particular, the provisions concerning the declaration of interests and confidentiality) and for this and other reasons employees may not be able to provide the same level of information and advice as they would to a members only meeting.

5.5 Any discussion with a political group or Councillor must be treated with strict confidentiality by the employees concerned and should not be accessible to any other political group. It is acknowledged, however, that factual information upon which any advice is based will, if requested, be available to all political groups.

5.6 Should any difficulty or uncertainty arise in the area of employee advice to party groups, this shall be raised with the Chief Executive who should discuss the matter with the group leader.

6. Local Representative

6.1 All Councillors represent part of the area of the Council. Within each Council's rules about consultation and Councillor improvement, employees must treat all Councillors fairly and openly in their role as local representatives. When performing their local representative role, Councillors will be seen by the public as representing the Council and should act in accordance with the principles of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and this protocol.

7. Correspondence

7.1 Correspondence between an individual Councillor and an employee should not normally be copied by the officer to any other Councillor. Where it is necessary to copy the correspondence to another member, this should be made clear to the original Councillor at the time.

8. Appointments

- 8.1 Where Councillors are involved in the appointments of employees they must act fairly and openly and judge candidates solely on merit.

9. Social Relationships

- 9.1 The relationship between Councillors and employees depends upon trust and this will be enhanced by the development of positive, friendly relationships. Councillors and employees will often be thrown together in social situations within the community and have a responsibility to project a positive image of the Council. Nonetheless, close personal familiarity between individual employees and Councillors can damage the relationship of mutual respect and the belief that employees give objective and professional advice and commitment to the Council. Councillors and employees should, therefore, be cautious in developing close personal friendships while they have an official relationship.

10. Public Comment

- 10.1 Councillors should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of employees in public. Employees must accord to Councillors the respect and courtesy due to them in their various roles. There are provisions in the Code of Conduct for Employees about speaking in public and employees should observe them.

11. Employees supporting Councillors

- 11.1 Where Councils arrange for employees to support members directly in carrying out their duties, particular considerations apply. Such employees are normally involved in administrative and practical support of Councillors. While such staff may operate to the requirements of individual Councillors in their daily business, it must be remembered that the employees are accountable to their line managers and any issues about conflicting priorities, conduct or performance must be referred to those managers.

The Grampian Valuation Joint Board

No Smoking Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Grampian Valuation Joint Board accepts its legal and moral duties under The Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 and The Prohibition of Smoking in Certain Premises (Scotland) Regulations 2006.
- 1.2 The Board recognises and accepts its responsibilities as an employer for providing a safe and healthy work place and working environment for all its employees in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc 1974. This duty is further enhanced by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which require employers to assess the risks to which employees are exposed and to take preventative and protective measures to eliminate or control them. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require employers to ensure that non-smokers are protected from the dangers of tobacco smoke in rest areas.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 To define the Board's policy on smoking within areas it controls.

Policy Statement

- 2.2 In order to protect individuals from tobacco induced ill health and injury; the Board has established a non-smoking environment within all Board buildings and the areas around the buildings under its control.

3.0 Restrictions

- 3.1 Smoking (which includes the use of 'e-cigarettes') is prohibited in all of the Board's offices.
- 3.2 Board employees are prohibited from smoking in the vicinity of public entrances/access points to Board offices etc, referred to above.
- 3.3 Anyone wishing to smoke must do so outwith working time and must swipe themselves out of the Clockwise time recording system before doing so.
- 3.4 Any member of staff who may be exposed to tobacco smoke in areas of which the Board is not in direct control (i.e. a domestic premise) must inform their manager and action will be taken to eliminate exposure.

4.0 Scope

- 4.1 The policy applies to all employees, staff, volunteers, visitors, clients, contractors and elected members of the Board. Any breach of the policy will be dealt with under the normal disciplinary procedures.

- 4.2 Information is contained within the signs on each building defining action to be taken to report on non-compliance.

5.0 Recruitment

- 5.1 Prospective employees are advised of this policy via:

- (i) information for applicants
- (ii) contractual documentation
- (iii) corporate induction course

6.0 Supportive Action

Smokers who want, as a result of the restrictions, to give up smoking, may request information, advice or counselling via the appropriate Depute (or through an Assistant Assessor/Principal Admin Officer if preferred).

APPENDIX 1

For help to stop smoking please call the NHS Grampian Smoking Advice Service on freephone 0800848484

The NHS Grampian Smoking Advice Service was launched in 2000. We aim to provide a smoking cessation service that is free and available to all smokers in Grampian who want to give up.

The Smoking Advice Service has three main functions:

1. Depending on what the individual wants, we can provide different levels of support. This could range from a brief discussion to coming along to a structured smoking cessation programme.

The programme sessions are:

- 6 group sessions
- one hour a week
- led by trained smoking cessation advisors
- provided throughout Grampian at different times and locations

We make every effort to accommodate the individual needs of clients when setting up new sessions.

There is evidence to suggest that taking part in this smoking cessation programme is extremely beneficial when trying to stop smoking. Our data shows the more sessions you attend, the more likely you are to successfully stop smoking. The NHS Grampian Smoking Cessation Service is nationally recognised as an example of best practice. It is very important that people in Grampian are aware of the help that is available to help them stop smoking.

2. We act as a point of contact and provide information to health staff and the general public on smoking cessation.
3. We provide training for smoking cessation advisors and to other health care staff who provide smoking cessation support to their patients.

